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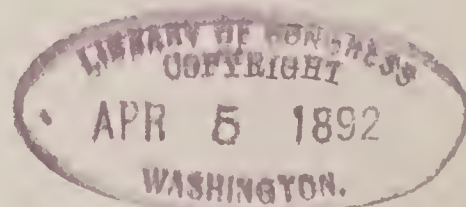
THE OLD TESTAMENT.

VOL. IV.

Psalms I-LXXII.

THE REVISED TEXT; WITH COMMENTS SELECTED FROM THE CHOICEST, MOST ILLUMINATING
AND HELPFUL THOUGHTS OF THE CHRISTIAN CENTURIES.

PREPARED BY
J. GLENTWORTH BUTLER, D.D.



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NOTE.—A few changes have been made in the Revised Text, mainly in accordance with the rendering preferred by the American Committee ; and some variant readings have been added in parenthesis. B.

THE BOOK OF PSALMS,

OR

THE PSALTER.

INTRODUCTION.*

TITLE.—We have unusually high authority for the title of this book. Our Lord Jesus Christ, and His apostle Peter, alike refer to it as “the Book of Psalms” (Luke 20 : 42 ; Acts 1 : 20). In Hebrew, the collection is entitled *T’Hillim*, praises : in Greek, *Psalmoi*, songs with a musical accompaniment. D. F.—The title Psalter, a collective term for the Book of Psalms, originated from the Alexandrian or Greek version. *Lange.*—As a large number of the Psalms are not strictly speaking hymns, but prayers for deliverance from trouble or poems of an elegiac or didactic character, it has been thought surprising that they should be styled collectively “Songs of Praise.” But a more suitable title could hardly be found ; for thanksgiving is the very life of the Psalms, even of those in which there breathes most the language of complaint. “To the glory of God” might stand as the inscription of each. The narrative Psalms praise whilst they record his mighty deeds ; the didactic Psalms declare his goodness as worthy of grateful acknowledgment ; the Psalms of sorrow are turned into songs of joy in the recollection or anticipation of his saving help. P.

FIVE BOOKS.—We have here 150 lyrical poems, designed for use in Divine worship. They vary, as do all collections of hymns, in beauty and excellence ; but all are Divine songs, composed by men that were moved by

* For a full presentation of points pertaining to the history, structure, and themes of the Psalter, the reader is referred to the volumes of Perowne, Delitzsch, Alexander, Cowles, Murphy, Lange, Thrupp, Barnes, Fausset, Binnie, and Isaac Taylor. For the average student and general reader the known and needful points are here given concisely, clearly, and in a natural order. B.

the Holy Ghost. There are really five Books of Psalms gathered into one. Those five may be distinguished as follows :—

First Book.—Psalms 1–41 ; ending with Doxology and double Amen.

Second Book.—Psalms 42–72 ; ending in the same way (with the addition that “the prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended”).

Third Book.—Psalms 73–89 ; ending in the same way.

Fourth Book.—Psalms 90–106 ; ending with Doxology, Amen, and Hallelujah.

Fifth Book.—Psalms 107–150 ; ending with many Hallelujahs.

There is thus a Pentateuch of the Psalms, as well as a Pentateuch of the Law. There is also something like the same variation in the use of the Divine name, in this later Pentateuch, that is found in the earlier. In the 1st, 4th, and 5th Books of Psalms, the Divine Being is usually spoken of and addressed as Jehovah ; in the 2d and 3d Books, commonly as Elohim, God.

FORMATION.—The Psalter was gradually formed during the times of the kingdom ; and comprises some odes that were evidently written after the Captivity. Chronological order is not carefully observed ; but, in the main, the oldest Psalms stand first ; the latest, last. D. F.

First Collection of Psalms. The internal evidence leads irresistibly to the conclusion that the original collection was of smaller compass, and consisted, we may reasonably suppose, of those poems mainly, if not exclusively, which are now classed in the first book. These, I incline to think, were first collected by Solomon, who would naturally provide for the preservation and transmission of his father’s poetry, the

more so as the musical services of the Temple were by his direction conducted with the utmost magnificence. It is not necessary to assume that *all* the Psalms of the first book were written by David or his contemporaries; for at a later period some might have been added to the collection as first made by Solomon.

Collection under Hezekiah. The next collection was probably not completed till the time of Hezekiah. To "the men of Hezekiah" we owe the preservation of many proverbs of Solomon not included in the first collection of his Proverbs 25 : 1). To them we may in like manner be indebted for the discovery and preservation of many of those Psalms attributed to David, which we find grouped together in the second book. The peculiarity of this book is, that it consists first of a group of Psalms attributed to the sons of Korah, then of a single Psalm said to be by Asaph, then of another group mostly bearing the name of David. In the third book we meet with a similar phenomenon. Here we have but one Psalm, the eighty-sixth, which is said to be a Psalm of David, and we have first a group of Psalms called Psalms of Asaph (73-83), and then a group of Korahite Psalms, forming a supplement to those in the second book, precisely as David's Psalms in the second book form a supplement to those in the first. Now we are told, in 2 Chr. 29 : 30, that Hezekiah, when he kept that great pass-over which filled all Jerusalem with joy, and which seemed the beginning of a better and happier time, appointed the Levites to "praise Jehovah in the words of David and of Asaph the seer." Such a fact harmonizes exactly with what we have seen as to the formation of the second and third books of the Psalms. Psalms of David are contained in the one, Psalms of Asaph in the other. And what more likely than that the compiler (or compilers) of these two books should have appended the remark at the end of 72 : 20, in order to intimate that he knew of no more Psalms which could with any show of reason be assigned to David? The fact that we have but one Psalm going by his name in the third book, lends color to the supposition that the person who compiled that book wrote the words which now stand as the conclusion of Psalm 72.

Collection under Ezra and Nehemiah. No further additions were made to the Psalter till the times of Ezra and Nehemiah, when it was enriched by a large number of songs written during and after the Exile. To this period are due, in the main, the fourth and fifth books. With these later Psalms were incorporated, how-

ever, some gleanings from earlier times; some precious relics of the ancient Psalmody of Israel not hitherto classed in any collection, and possibly preserved some of them only by oral repetition from father to son. The fourth book opens with a Psalm said to be "a prayer of Moses, the man of God." Then follows a series without names, and in this book two only, the one hundred and first and one hundred and third, are said to be by David. In the fifth book we have fifteen more attributed to him, some obviously by mistake, others, as the one hundred and tenth, beyond all doubt rightly so attributed. From all this we conclude, first, that the formation of the present Psalter was a gradual work, and next, that though several individual Psalms have been dislocated, so as to disturb the chronological order, another order having been substituted for that of sequence in time, yet that in the main, the oldest Psalms stand first; the latest, last. The most ancient songs, those of David and of David's time, are chiefly contained in Psalms 1-41. In 42-89 mainly those of the middle period of Hebrew poetry. In 90-150 by far the majority are of a later date, composed during or after the Babylonish captivity.

But as in the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, so here the chronological order seems to be recognized, only to be crossed and broken by another. The groups, as a whole, are chronologically disposed, but not so the several Psalms. Here a different principle of arrangement has been observed, and one to a great extent of a merely external kind. Psalms are placed together, sometimes because the instruction conveyed in both is the same; sometimes because the same word or expression occurs in both: thus, for instance, Psalm 51 (David's) follows Psalm 50 (Asaph's), because both disparage the sacrifices of slain beasts, as compared with the personal sacrifice of a broken heart and an obedient will. Again, Psalm 35 follows Psalm 34, because in both mention is made of "the angel of Jehovah." Psalms 54 and 55 are associated, because in verse four of the one we have, "O God, hear my prayer;" and in verse two of the other, "Give ear, O God, to my prayer." This principle being once recognized, we may understand how it comes to pass that later Psalms may be found in the earlier books, and earlier Psalms in the later. P.

It thus appears that this book of Psalms, as we have it, was a *growth*—the accumulation of religious odes composed during the lapse of several centuries, and hence a natural product of the piety and talent, on the one hand, and of

providential circumstances on the other, which make up the religious history of the covenant people during those most favored ages of their national life. II. C.

INSCRIPTIONS.

In a very large proportion, we find an ancient title or inscription, varying in length and fulness; sometimes simply describing the composition, as a psalm, a song, a prayer, etc.; sometimes stating the subject or historical occasion, either in plain or enigmatical expressions; sometimes directing the performance, by indicating the accompanying instrument, by specifying the appropriate key or mode, or by naming the particular performer; sometimes giving the name of the author; these various intimations occurring sometimes singly, but frequently in combination. These inscriptions are found in the Hebrew text, as far as we can trace its history, not as addenda, but as integral parts of the composition; and such indications of the author and the subject, at the commencement of a composition, are familiar both to classical and oriental usage. A.—These superscriptions are very old; for they are found in the Greek translation called the Septuagint, which was begun as early as 285 B.C. They were then so old that some of them were not understood by the translators, and are therefore merely represented in Greek letters. They must therefore have been at least as old as Ezra. The authority of these titles has been variously estimated. The ancients generally regarded them as equally inspired with the text itself. Some, however, as Theodore of Mopsuestia, at the close of the fourth century, began to reject their authority. Among these may be found the greater number of modern critics. But Hengstenberg and Tholuck, Delitzsch, Perowne, Alexander, and Moll attach weight to them. Their antiquity and their greater frequency in the earliest books, as Delitzsch observes, afford a strong presumption that they are not due to a later editor. They are mostly from a remote date, if not from the very age of the authors. M.—These ancient superscriptions have a real and unimpeachable historical value. They give the earliest accessible information respecting the origin of the compositions to which they are attached. They come down to us, along with the original text, from an age that had already become antiquity when the Septuagint appeared. The very musical notes that accompany them were unintelligible to the scholars of the Maccabæan times. E. C. B.

Authorship. When we come to examine the

Psalms more closely, and to compare their contents with their reputed authorship, we find ourselves compelled very often to reject the latter. Facts prove convincingly that *all* the inscriptions are not trustworthy, and consequently that they must be tested by a careful examination of the style and contents of the Psalms to which they are severally prefixed. P.—Great uncertainty must necessarily rest upon the authorship of the Psalms. Internal evidence, whether of thought or style or language, is a precarious guide. As a whole they suffer less from this uncertainty than might be expected. Their interest is human and universal. They appeal to the experience of all ages. A. F. K.

It is of less consequence to determine precisely by whom the Holy Spirit delivered these oracles, since we have indubitable evidence of the sacred character of the whole book; for it is collectively cited in Scripture (generally by the name of David), and is prophetic in almost every part; and several of the persons who are supposed to have contributed to the composition of the book are expressly represented as prophets in Scripture. Gray.

—Whatever differences of historical relation appear in different parts of the Psalter, the whole constitutes, plainly, a realm by itself, in the imperial compass of the Scripture; as much so as does the earlier Pentateuch, whose division into five books, the somewhat similar traditional division of the Psalter into five associated parts has often been said to resemble. The whole collection of petitions and praises grew out of the unique career of the People of God, from the day of Moses, the Servant of God, down toward if not to the day of the Maccabees. It is equally available, in all its extent, to those who would use it for present ministration to spiritual feeling. And it is obviously wholly unimportant whether two Psalms were composed or not by the same writer, were composed or not at about the same time; whether they sprang out of one set of circumstances, or out of two, resembling each other, though separated by years. R. S. S.

Varieties of Composition. Six varieties of poetical compositions are mentioned. These are the *Shir*, the *Mizmor*, the *Maschil*, the *Michtam*, the *Shiggaion*, and the *Tehillah*. The word *Shir* is best rendered "song," as in our version. It indicates simply a lyrical composition in general, and is not unfrequently joined either with certain notices (historical and liturgical), or with some other poetical designation intended to define more accurately the character of the poetry.

There are altogether thirty-one of these compositions, seventeen of which are simply *shir*, the other fourteen are *shir* combined with some other title. The term *Mizmor*, rendered "psalm" in our version, occurs in the superscription of not less than fifty-nine Psalms, being the designation most frequently used. Twelve times it occurs combined with *shir*, when our version translates "psalm or song," or else "song or psalm." The term *mizmor* means a poem or song intended to be accompanied by music. The designation *Maschil* occurs at the head of thirteen Psalms. The derivation of the word seems to point to wisdom and instruction, hence to the *maschil* as the didactic hymn. Such is really the meaning of the term. All the psalms which are so designated present a remarkable unity of thought and purpose. They are all didactic. Six Psalms bear the superscription of *Michtam*, in the margin of the Authorized Version "Golden Psalm." The derivation of the word (whether from the verb "to grave" or "to hide") seems to point to personal experience of a deep kind, of which the *michtam* is the record. This entirely agrees with the contents of these Psalms, especially of Psalms 66-70, which refer to imminent dangers from which the Psalmist obtained deliverance. All the *michtams* are of Davidic authorship. A. E.

Minor Notations. 1. "To the chief musician." The public use of a Psalm is indicated by the phrase "to the precentor" or master of song. This phrase occurs fifty-five times in the titles of the Psalms, and once in Hab. 3 : 18. M. — In three Psalms the name of Jeduthun (or Ethan) is added, who we know was one of David's three famous choir-masters. 2. "For teaching," Psalm 60. This may perhaps intimate that the Psalm was intended to be taught publicly by the Levites to the people, but it may also mean that it was to be taught to the Levites themselves. 3. "To bring to remembrance," Psalms 38 and 70. In 1 Chr. 16 : 4, it is joined with, "to give thanks and to praise," as a part of the special duties of the Levites who were set by David before the ark, and there it would seem to mean "to call to memory," so as to praise and celebrate the goodness of Jehovah. 4. "For thanksgiving," Psalm 100, Delitzsch explains as a direction that the Psalm should be sung when the thank-offering was offered; Ewald, that it should be sung as a thanksgiving. P.

INSPIRED ORIGIN OF THE PSALMS.

The Mosaic system, while it was defensive

against the surrounding iniquity, was also something more and something higher. That system, both institutional and doctrinal, fenced in, as it were, a clear space, a free and secure domain, for the fuller development of a religion, inward and personal, devotional and spiritual, the materials for which it could hardly have supplied by presenting, as it did, God as ruler and judge, and man as a servant who continually either sinned, or was on the brink of falling into sin. In the inner sanctuary, thus provided for the most capable human souls, was reared the strong spiritual life which appears to have developed itself pre-eminently in the depth, richness, tenderness, and comprehensiveness of the Psalms. To the work they have here accomplished there is no parallel upon earth. For the present I put aside all details, and am content to stand upon this fact—that a compilation, which began (at the latest) with a shepherd of Palestine, three thousand years ago, has been the prime and paramount book of devotion from that day to this; first for the Hebrew race, both in its isolation and after it was brought by the translation of its sacred books into relations with the Gentile world; and then for all the Christian races, in all their diversities of character and circumstance. Further, that there is now, if possible, less chance than ever of the displacement of these marvellous compositions from their supremacy in the worship of the Christian Church. And beyond doubt it may be also said that their function has not been one of ritual pomp and outward power alone. They have dwelt in the Christian heart, and at the very centre of that heart; and wherever the pursuits of the inner life have been most largely conceived and cultivated, there, and in the same proportion, the Psalms have towered over every other vehicle of general devotion. We have a conspicuous illustration of their office in the fact that of two hundred and forty-three citations from the Old Testament found in the pages of the New, no less than one hundred and sixteen are from the single Book of Psalms, and that a similar proportion holds with most of the early Fathers. The result of a careful examination made by Bishop Alexander is that reference is made to the Psalms, either by quotation or otherwise, in no fewer than two hundred and eighty-six passages of the New Testament.

We have thus before us the fact that the Psalms, composed for the devotions of the Hebrews from two to three thousand years ago, constitute down to the present day for Chris-

tians the best and highest book of devotion. A noteworthy fact even on the surface of it ; more noteworthy still when we go below the surface into the meaning. The Hebrews were Semitic, Christendom is Aryan ; the Hebrews were local, Christendom is world-wide ; the Hebrews were often tributary, and finally lost their liberties and place ; Christianity has risen over every obstacle, and has long been the dominating power of the world. The Hebrews had no literature outside their religion, nor any fine art ; Christendom has appropriated, and even rivalled, both the literature and the art of the greatest among the ancients. This strange book of Hebrew devotion had no attractions outside Hebrewism except for Christians ; and Christians have found nothing to gather, in the same kind, from any of the other religions in the world. The stamp of continuity and identity has been set upon one, and one only, historic series ; one, and one only, thread runs down through the whole succession of the ages ; and, among many witnesses to this continuity, the Psalms are probably among the most conspicuous. This stamp purports to be, and to have been all along, divine, and the unparalleled evidence of results all goes to show that it is not a forgery. The wonderful phenomenon thus presented to us can hardly be said to admit of enhancement ; and yet it is, perhaps, enhanced when we bear in mind that the long period of this perpetual youth, exhibited by the Psalms, has been broken by the promulgation of a new religion, together with all the changes of fact and developments of principle which transformed the heathen world.

Moreover, we should remember that the shapings of all language merely human are essentially short-lived, and forms of speech succeed one another as wave follows upon wave. But herein seems probably to lie one of the ways in which the Divine revelation asserts itself. It seems to have the faculty of giving to things mutable the privilege and the power of the immutable, and to endow fashions of speech, when they belong to the heart's core of human nature, with a charter that is to endure throughout all time. I submit, then, that the fact of so wonderful a power as was thus exercised by the Psalms, in such diversities of time, race, and circumstances, is not only without parallel, but is removed by such a breadth of space from all other facts of human experience in the same province, as to constitute in itself a strong presumption that the cause also is one lying beyond the range of ordinary human action, and may most reasonably be set down as consisting

in that speciality of Divine suggestion and guidance which we term revelation. *W. E. Gladstone.*

DAVID THE ORIGINATOR OF PSALMODY.

The Mosaic system reached its culminating point and full development in the reign of David, when the land of promise was in full possession, the provisions of the law for the first time fully carried out, and a permanent sanctuary secured and, we may even say, prospectively erected. The chain of Messianic promises, which for ages had been broken, or concealed beneath the prophetic ritual, was now renewed by the addition of a new link, in the great Messianic promise made to David (2 Sam. 7) of perpetual succession in his family. As the head of this royal race from which the Messiah was to spring, and as the great theocratical model of succeeding ages, who is mentioned more frequently in prophecy and gospel than all his natural descendants put together, he was inspired to originate a new kind of sacred composition, that of Psalmody, or rather to educe from the germ which Moses had planted an abundant harvest of religious poetry, not for his own private use, but for that of the Church, in the new form of public service which he added by divine command to the Mosaic ritual. As an inspired psalmist, as the founder and director of the temple-music, and as a model and exemplar to those after him, David's position is unique in sacred history. As his military prowess had been necessary to complete the conquest of the land, so his poetical and musical genius was necessary to secure his influence upon the church forever. The result is, that no part of the Bible has been so long, so constantly, and so extensively familiar, both to Jews and Christians, as the PSALMS OF DAVID. This is entirely correct, as all the other writers of the Psalms, excepting Moses, merely carry out and vary what had been already done by David ; and as if to guard the system from deterioration, the further we proceed the more direct and obvious is this dependence upon David, as " the man raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel " (2 Sam. 23 : 1), the master and the model of all other psalmists, from the days of Solomon to those of Ezra. J. A. A.

The great era of lyric poetry begins with David. Born with the genius of a poet, and skilled in music, he had already practised his art whilst he kept his father's sheep on the hills of Bethlehem. It is probable that he had added careful study to his natural gifts, for we find

him closely associated with Samuel and his schools of prophets—men who, like himself, were both poets and musicians. The art which he had thus acquired, and thus carefully studied, was his solace through life. His harp was the companion of his flight from Saul and of his flight from Absalom. It was heard in the caves of Engedi, on the broad uplands of Mahanaim, on the throne of Israel. We have songs of his which date from all periods of his life—from the days of his shepherd youth to his old age, and within a short time of his death. Both his life and his character are reflected in his poetry. That life, so full of singular vicissitudes, might of itself have formed the subject of an epic, and in any other nation but that of the Hebrews would certainly have been made the groundwork of a poem. It is a life teeming with romantic incidents and those sudden turns of fortune which poets love to describe. The latter portion of his history, that which begins with his great crimes, and which traces, step by step, their fearful but inevitable chastisement, is itself a tragedy—a tragedy, in terror and pathos, equal to any which the great poets of the Grecian drama have left us, and, in point of human interest as well as divine instruction, incomparably beyond them. P.

It has often been asserted that the David of the Psalms is an entirely different character from the David of history. But the difference is often exaggerated. Not a few of the Psalms illustrate and are illustrated by the history of David's life. In that history, fragmentary and incomplete as it necessarily is, are to be found abundant traces of the religious side of his character; of the confidence which in the midst of danger and difficulty threw itself unperplexed upon God; of the patience which could await God's time instead of rushing to revenge; of the simple faith which ascribed all success and advancement to God; of the hope which looked trustingly forward into the unknown future, in calm assurance that God would fulfil his promises; last, but not least, of the penitence which humbled itself in unfeigned sorrow for sin. A. F. K.

His Psalms are the fruit not only of his personality, which was richly endowed and sustained by the Spirit of God (2 Sam. 23 : 2), but also of his peculiar experiences, and of those of his people that were interwoven with his. From the time of his anointing, David's path led through suffering to glory; song, however, as an Indian proverb says, has sprung from suffering. His life was rich in vicissitudes, which must have tuned him, now to elegiac complaints,

now to hymnic strains of praise; the founder of the kingdom of promise, he was at the same time a prophecy of the coming Christ; his typically moulded life could not otherwise utter itself than in words that were typical or even consciously prophetic. D.

His harp was full-stringed, and every angel of joy and of sorrow swept over the chords as he passed. For the hearts of a hundred men strove and struggled together within the narrow continent of his single heart; and will the scornful men have no sympathy for one so conditioned, but scorn him because he ruled not with constant quietness the unruly host of divers natures which dwelt within his single soul? With the defence of his backslidings, which he hath himself more keenly scrutinized and more bitterly lamented than any of his censors, we do not charge ourselves, because they were, in a manner, necessary, that he might be the full-orbed man which was needed to utter every form of spiritual feeling. The Lord did not intend that His Church should be without a rule for uttering its gladness and its glory, its lamentation and its grief; and to bring such a rule and institute into being, He raised up His servant David, as formerly He raised up Moses, to give to the Church an institute of Law; and to that end He led him the round of all human conditions, that he might catch the spirit proper to every one, and utter it according to truth. He allowed him not to curtail his being by treading the round of one function; but by every variety of function He cultivated his whole being, and filled his soul with wisdom and feeling. He found him objects for every affection, that the affection might not slumber and die. He brought him up in the sheep-pastures, that the groundwork of his character might be laid among the simple and universal forms of feeling. He took him to the camp and made him a conqueror, that he might be filled with nobleness of soul and ideas of glory. He placed him in the palace, that he might be filled with ideas of majesty and sovereign might. He carried him to the wilderness, and placed him in solitudes, that his soul might dwell alone in the sublime conceptions of God and His mighty works; and He kept him there for long years, with only one step between him and death, that he might be well schooled to trust and depend upon the providence of God. *Irving.*

Sacred song had been cultivated in Israel from the earliest times; but it was not till after it had been elevated by David into an essential element of worship, and the people had received from him and other poets of his times a copious sup-

ply of sacred songs, that they could learn how to bring before God in music and song the joy and grief, the hope and fear, the prayer and praise that moved their inmost heart. It is impossible to rate too highly the treasure that Israel possessed in the Psalms, that copy-book of the saints, as Luther called them; nor can it be doubted that it was chiefly by means of the Psalms that the word of God dwelt in the homes of Israel, and that the knowledge of the sacred history was kept up among the people. O.

It was not without a wise forecast of the world's necessities, and an insight into human nature *all around*, that God ordained that the Bible, which should contain our best models of sanctified culture, should be constructed in the East, and by the inspiration of minds of an Eastern stock and discipline; whose emotive nature could be broken up like the fountains of a great deep. Our unimpassioned, taciturn, and often cloudy temperament in religion needs an infusion of the Oriental life-blood into the stock of our Christian experience to render the Psalms of David a natural expression of our devotions. We need a culture of sensibility which shall *demand* these Psalms as a medium of utterance. We need habits of feeling, disciplined indeed, not effervescent, not mystic, but, on the other hand, not crushed, not fearful of outflow, not bereaved of speech. We need a sensitiveness to the objects of our faith, which shall *create* desire for the objects of prayer, not passionate, not devoid of self-possession, but fluent and self-forgetful in its earnestness, so that it shall have more of the grace of a child in its outgoings. A. Phelps.

THEMES, OR SUBJECT-MATTER, OF THE PSALMS.

In the long and dreary night, one race alone—and one by no means the most distinguished for art, learning, and refinement—upheld the torch of a spiritual faith and a belief in the one true God. The Hebrew theology appears in those remote ages, amid the otherwise universal prevalence of the grossest idolatry, as a miraculous light “streaking the darkness radiantly.” I do not need here to insist upon anything in the literature or the history of this wonderful people which has been called into doubt by the subtle questionings of modern scepticism. I will take only the Psalms, which, as products of the Hebrew mind of a very high antiquity, no scholar has ever thought of questioning. Many of them are undoubtedly as old as the Iliad and the Odyssey, some are probably much older. Contrast their pure and sublime mono-

theism with the theogony of Homer and Hesiod, and with the popular gods of Egypt and India; and account for it, if you can, consistently with the laws of the human mind, and with the history of human progress in civilization, philosophy, and religion, without the aid of immediate inspiration or an antecedent revelation. F. Bowen.

What sources of religious instruction and of quickening impulse were accessible to these writers? Comprehensively, they had two sources: (1) They saw God in creation and in nature. As we may, so might they look abroad of a starry night, and “consider the heavens the work of divine fingers” (Psalm 8); they could listen and hear the heavens “telling the glory of God” (Psalm 19). Or they could look forth upon the fresh face of the earth and see the valleys covered with corn, the pastures with flocks, and the hills girding on joy (Psalm 65). C.—The various tribes could find their several occupations of shepherds, of warriors, of traffickers, according as they were settled on the margin of the desert, in the mountain fastnesses, or on the shores of the Mediterranean. The sacred poetry, which was to be the delight and support of the human soul in all regions of the world, embraced within its range the natural features of almost every country. Stanley.—But (2) more and better than this, *the long ages of God's covenant people had a history*. God had come down and talked with men of faith, and had condescended to enter into covenant with them. He had given them his name “*Jehovah*,” the faithful God, the maker and fulfiller of promise. It is interesting to see how constantly the authors of these sacred songs fall back upon the revelations of God in history; how naturally their thoughts recur to the promise of Canaan to the patriarchs, to the wonders wrought in fulfilment thereof in Egypt, at the Red Sea, in the desert, and in the conquest of Canaan; how constantly their faith seeks and finds support in those marvellous “works” of the right hand of the Lord. At these fountains of truth they drank all along the otherwise unwatered desert of their earthly pilgrimage. These wonderful facts were good material to work into poetry and song as well as into the warp and woof of the religious life; and hence we shall not be surprised to find allusions made often, yet not too often—allusions simple yet always impressive, and sometimes sublime—to those wonderful works of their own ever-faithful Jehovah. H. C.

While the Psalms refer largely to nature as God's work, to the law of Moses and Israel's early

history, their great theme is man himself, the subject of God. The Psalmist naturally divides man into the man or the people of God, and the wicked or the nations that know not the true God, but make to themselves, in their folly, gods many and lords many. He himself is in communion with God, being one of the holy men of God, moved by the Holy Ghost to compose the Songs of Zion. He speaks at one time of the private individual, at another of the public official. He sings of personal experience in strains now plaintive, now joyful, now telling of holiness and sin and all that is involved in the sublime principles of our moral being, now dwelling on pleasure and pain and all that is implied in the varied emotions of our susceptible nature, and now acknowledging, with mingled feelings of gratulation and solemnity, the bearing which the former have upon the latter. He celebrates the high place and privilege of the people of God, and signalizes the righteous man as the constituent unit of the peculiar people, the holy nation, the Church of God. He sets his brand upon oppression and wrong, and pleads the cause of the widow and the fatherless. He touches not unfrequently on the wicked, whether an individual whom he has occasion to single out for special denunciation, or the nations that have forgotten God, or those who are of Israel and yet are not Israel, but double traitors to the God who redeemed them. M.

The ideal man, considered apart from the realization in Christ, as portrayed by the Psalmists, has these characteristics: unshaken trust in God, entire devotion to His service, submission to His will, reliance on His love met by a corresponding affection, a more than filial tenderness; a longing for His presence in the sanctuary, and for fruition of that presence in heaven; a thorough appreciation of the righteousness of all His dispensations; a confident, nay certain, anticipation of a full manifestation of His righteousness. Faith, hope, and love assume thus their true relative position in the development of the spiritual man. On the other side we find single-heartedness, transparent truthfulness, utter absence of guile, purity of heart as the centre and mainspring of moral life; justice, fortitude, self-control, rectitude in dealings between man and man; generosity, sympathy with all forms of suffering, warm and tender toward friends, but ever prompt and earnest toward all men, even opponents; loyalty of subjects to their king, unselfish self-sacrificing love of princes to their people. Here too, not for the first time, but in a higher de-

gree than ever, and with a singular nearness to the Christian ideal, we remark the grace of humility; the sense of poverty and need; the first distinct intimation that a broken heart and contrite spirit are acceptable sacrifices to God, and that the meek and lowly are especial objects of His favor and grace. Nor is there any book in ancient literature, profane or sacred, which shows so wide and perfect a sympathy with man in his weakness, and in his strength, in his joy, and in his sufferings. Deep humility and oneness of mind with the poor are traits, of which scarcely a shadow is found in the lyrical poetry of those Gentile nations, which attained the highest degree of culture; as expressed in this book they present a direct contrast to the characteristics of Hellenic genius. The Psalmists one and all, but none so perfectly as David, to whom the book owes its traditional title, while opening their own heart with all its depths of agony and earnestness of aspiration, give full expression to the yearnings of mankind. We find, however, throughout a combination of feelings elsewhere unknown, or imperfectly developed; a deep sense of inherent sin and unworthiness, together with a consciousness of integrity in purpose and intent; a full recognition of a standard of morals and holiness, so perfect as to involve the condemnation of the sinner, yet withal a loving trust in the mercy and grace of the lawgiver and judge; in short, a true preparation for the special work of Christ. Cook.

Not any of these objects, however, is clearer to his perception than the great Being to whom he refers all—nature, scripture, and humanity. In Him, according to the Psalmist, we live and move and have our being; of Him and through Him and to Him are all things. Whenever he speaks of anything, he speaks of it as originating from Him, dependent on Him, and subsisting for Him. And what gives any importance or significance to man and the sphere of earthly things, of which he is, without his own option, the centre and end, is simply his essential relation and accountability to the One Great Eternal Spirit. M.—Manifold as are the Psalms, they all speak to one Person—God. All meet in Him as the one centre toward which they are directed. In their various utterances to God there is the same spirit; the same principle seems to dictate each. They all speak the language of faith in God. And you will find this faith in God unfolding itself into: Faith in God as the Creator and Preserver of the world; as the living King and Ruler of men; as the righteous Judge; as having compassion upon all who

suffer ; as One who will not reject the penitent.
G. Horbes.

The attentive student of Scripture observes that there is a growth in Revelation keeping pace with the growth of the human race. The roots and stems of all revealed truth are in the Pentateuch ; they bud and branch out and blossom in the rest of the Old Testament ; and they bear their full fruit in the New. This property belongs to the Psalms as well as the other parts of Scripture. M.—Not only redemption itself but also the revelation and the knowledge of it have had a progressive history, which reaches on from Paradise down through time into eternity. Redemption realizes itself in a system of facts, in which God's loving purpose to redeem sinful humanity is unfolded ; and the revelation of redemption anticipates this gradual realization, in order at once to guarantee its Divine authorship, and to render its comprehension possible. In the Psalms there is presented to us more than half a millennium of this progressive realization, disclosure, and apprehension of redemption. And when we take into account the fact that one Psalm is dated from the time of Moses, and that the retrospective glances of the historical Psalms go back even to the age of the patriarchs, we may say that there is scarcely an occurrence that constituted an epoch in connection with the history of redemption, from the election of Abraham down to the new position assigned in the world to the post-exilic nation, which does not somehow or other find its expression in the Psalter. Nor is it merely facts external to it that re-echo in its lyrics ; but seeing that David, next to Abraham undoubtedly the most significant religious character of the Old Testament, is its chief author, it is itself a direct, integral portion of the history of redemption. And it is also a source of information for the history of the revelation of redemption, inasmuch as it flowed not merely from the spirit of faith, but also at the same time largely from the spirit of prophecy ; above all, however, it is our most important memorial of the progressive apprehension of the knowledge of redemption, seeing it shows how, between the giving of the law from Sinai, and the proclamation of the gospel from Zion, the final and essential redemption broke a path for itself in the consciousness and the spiritual life of the Jewish Church. D.

There is a theology of the Psalms, as there is a theology of the prophetic books. And these two are one in spirit and contents, though in the Old Testament hymnal that theology takes the

form of personal testimony, while in the prophetic literature it assumes the form of authoritative instruction. It is an intensely vital and vitalizing theology. It is in no sense speculative. It has little to say about the future. It deals almost exclusively with the mortal life of man. It is a philosophy of history ; and the forces by which national and universal history is shaped are regarded as identical with those by which the individual life is mastered. In the moral experiences of the soul are mirrored the processes and the issues of God's universal government. Psalmist and prophet alike conceive of God as the Living One, ruling in eternal righteousness and grace. Hence the song of personal deliverance strikes the key of a world-wide anthem ; and the most august predictions find their response in the prayers of the servant of God. This combination of the practical and the theoretical, of experience and doctrine, of psalmody and prophecy, is in the highest degree suggestive and instructive. The true theology is always one which can be fearlessly and fully preached, and which commands the prompt and joyful testimony of the heart ; and in all true personal experience stir the living germs of all that is deepest and highest in doctrine. Nor is it difficult to discover the general features of this common doctrinal system. Sin is the awful crime of which man has been guilty ; and sin is forgetfulness of God, and abandonment of Him. That plunges the soul, and the nation, into darkness. That leads to an ever-deepening and widening moral degradation. That provokes the righteous judgment of God. Yet that judicial economy is always an economy of redemption. Retribution is subordinate to rescue. The infinite mercy of God co-ordinates and crowns all His penal and disciplinary afflictions. True, in psalmist and prophet, this great thought moves within national limitations. It is applied to the seed of Abraham, the people of the covenant. Its universal application would have been premature. It needed confinement for its development and maturity ; but it requires even now no other qualification than that which the universal tone of Christianity supplies. The philosophy of history is here ; sin provokes judgment, and judgment clears the way for repentance and redemption ! Thus the gospel beats within the bosom of the law, and the fair city of God emerges from the smoke and confusion of the world's long and bitter discipline ! *Behrends.*

The Theistic ideas of the Psalter are those which we find in our creeds ; the Attributes of God are laid down, and reasoned from, as

Augustine might have done. And no sufficient cause can be discovered for considering the Theistic teaching of the Psalms to be the mere poetical adornment and imaginative vesture of thought. The Christological ideas of the Psalms supply a key which unlocks many passages. The soul, turning to questions which more immediately concern its own salvation, and inquiring the grounds of its acceptance, can find no answer in Paul more profoundly evangelical than those which are given by David and other psalmists. The Psalter thus bears witness to Christian theology. *Bishop Alexander.*

In the Book of Psalms it may be safely affirmed that every point in the gospel doctrine of justification is brought out by anticipation and strikingly exhibited in connection with the faith and worship of Old Testament believers. Here is the same confession of sin (14 : 1) ; the same conviction of guilt and demerit (130 : 4, 7) ; the same fear of God's righteous judgment (6 : 1) ; the same sense of inevitable condemnation on the ground of God's law (143 : 2) ; the same earnest cry for undeserving mercy (51 : 1) ; the same faith in His revealed character as the just God and the Saviour (25 : 8) ; the same hope of pardon, resting on a propitiation (130 : 7) ; the same pleading of God's name, or the glory of all His perfections (25 : 11) ; the same joy and peace in believing (89 : 15, 16) ; the same trust in God and the faithfulness of His promises (89 : 1, 2) ; the same trust in the Saviour of sinners (2 : 12) ; the same confidence in another righteousness than their own (84 : 9) ; the same patient, persevering, hopeful waiting upon God (62 : 5-8). *J. Buchanan.*—We have the truest view of sin before us in the Psalms. We do find there (in the fifty-first Psalm) the confession of a *sinful nature*, as well as of sinful acts. We find the confession that all sin, as sin, is committed against God, even when the act is done against our neighbor. We find the ever-living consciousness that God looks at the heart, and not merely at the outward act. "The righteous God trieth the heart and reins." We find the blessedness of forgiveness stated in words which the Apostle Paul cites in his Epistle to the Romans, when asserting the doctrine of justification by faith. We find the need, and the longing for sanctification through the Spirit, plainly and feelingly declared. *P.*

The Psalmist deals with the profoundest mysteries, the purest and tenderest emotions, the most sublime and sacred questions that can perplex or thrill, or solemnize the soul. He sings of love, mercy, truth, power ; of conscience,

duty, freedom, responsibility ; of hatred, cruelty, falsehood, sin ; of death and hell, of life and heaven, of man and God. These will ever be absorbing themes. Much that can stir the depths of the soul in a healthy and hopeful way is found in the Psalms. And the Psalmist speaks with authority. We hear the voice of the Spirit of truth in these sacred songs. We may now and then find it difficult to catch the meaning ; but when we understand the import of the strain, we are sure it is the truth. This makes the book of Psalms unspeakably precious to the anxious soul, unable to solve its own doubts, meeting with its searchings of heart put into fitting terms, and satisfied that the answers given are the findings of truth. It is full of these heart problems, and leaves none of them without a solution resting on the authority of God. *M.*

"My voice is unto God, and I will cry" (Psalm 77 : 1), might well stand as a motto to the whole of the Psalter ; for, whether immersed in the depths, or whether blessed with greatness and comfort on every side, it is to God that the Psalmist's voice seems ever to soar spontaneously aloft. Alike in the welcome of present deliverance or in the contemplation of past mercies, he addresses himself straight to God as the object of his praise. Alike in the persecutions of his enemies and the desertions of his friends, in wretchedness of body and in the agonies of inward repentance, in the hour of impending danger and in the hour of apparent despair, it is direct to God that he utters forth his supplications. Connected with this is the faith by which he everywhere lives in God rather than in himself. God's mercies, God's greatness, form the sphere in which his thoughts are ever moving ; even when through excess of affliction reason is rendered powerless, the naked contemplation of God's wonders of old forms his effectual support. It is of the essence of such faith that the Psalmist's view of the perfections of God should be true and vivid. The Psalter describes God as He is ; it glows with testimonies to His power and providence, His love and faithfulness, His holiness and righteousness. Correspondingly it testifies against every form of idol which men would substitute in the living God's place ; whether it be the outward image, the work of men's hands, or whether it be the inward vanity of earthly comfort or prosperity, to be purchased at the cost of the honor which cometh from God alone. The solemn "See that there is no idol-way in me" of Psalm 139, the striving of the heart after the very truth and nought beside, is the exact anticipation of the "Little

children, keep yourselves from idols," of the loved apostle in the New Testament.

The Psalms not only set forth the perfections of God ; they proclaim also the duty of worshipping Him by the acknowledgment and adoration of His perfections. They encourage all outward rites and means of worship ; new songs, use of musical instruments of all kinds, appearance in God's courts, lifting up of hands, prostration at His footstool. Among these they recognize the ordinance of sacrifice as an expression of the worshipper's consecration of himself to God's service. But not the less do they repudiate the outward rite when separated from that which it was designed to express ; a broken and contrite heart is, from erring man, the genuine sacrifice which God requires. Similar depth is observable in the view taken by the psalmists of human sin. It is to be traced not only in its outward manifestations, but also in the inward workings of the heart, and is to be primarily ascribed to man's innate corruption. It shows itself alike in deeds, in words, and in thoughts ; nor is even the believer able to discern all its various ramifications. Connected with this view of sin is, on the one hand, the picture of the utter corruption of the ungodly world ; on the other, the encouragement to genuine repentance, the assurance of divine forgiveness, and the trust in God as the source of complete redemption. In regard of the law, the Psalmist, while warmly acknowledging its excellence, feels yet that it cannot so effectually guide his own unassisted exertions as to preserve him from error. He needs an additional grace from above, the grace of God's Holy Spirit. But God's Spirit is also a free spirit ; led by this he will discern the law, with all its precepts, to be no arbitrary rule of bondage, but rather a charter and instrument of liberty (119 : 45). *Dic. B.*

The Psalms are in their leading character devotional summaries, expressing the pious thoughts and feelings which the consideration of God's ways and the knowledge of His revelations were fitted to raise in reflecting and spiritual minds. But the singular thing is, that they are this for the New as well as for the Old Testament worshipper. They are still incomparably the most perfect expression of the religious sentiment, and the best directory to the soul in its meditations and communings about divine things, which is anywhere to be found. There is not a feature in the divine character, nor an aspect of any moment in the life of faith, to which expression, more or less distinct, is not there given. How could such a book have

come into existence centuries before the Christian era, but for the fact that the Old and the New dispensations—however they may have differed in outward form, or in the ostensible nature of the transactions belonging to them—were founded on the same relations, and pervaded by the same essential truths and principles ? No otherwise could the Book of Psalms have served as the great handbook of devotion to the members of both covenants. *There* the disciples of Moses and Christ meet as on common ground—the one still readily and gratefully using the fervent utterances of faith and hope which the other had breathed forth ages before. And where in all Scripture can the believer, who now "worships in spirit and in truth," more readily find for himself the words that shall fitly express his loftiest conceptions of God, embody his most spiritual and enlarged views of the divine government, or tell forth the feelings and desires of his soul even in many of its most lively and elevated moods ? P. F.

Aside from the individual psalms, the critics must tell us how the collection came to reach in Israel that high plane of spiritual feeling and utterance, which has never yet been passed, and that amid the densest moral darkness of neighboring peoples. There is but one Psalter for the whole Bible. And it has proved sufficient. Its buttresses are deep and strong enough to bear up a structure that was twenty centuries building ; its invisible arch lofty enough to cover the grandest architectures of prophetic vision and of Christian hope. On any principle of development, let them inform us, if the Mosaic laws and institutions were not behind it, what was behind it, to push it upward, before the period of the exile, and to some extent before the acme of prophetic influence had been reached, to such a pitch of moral grandeur, to such hitherto unknown ideas of God and man's relations to him ? What long stretches of time, what mighty moral forces, what terrible wrestlings of the human spirit must have gone before that story of temptation and blessed escape found in the seventy-third Psalm ! What an experience of precious rest in God, whose sweet depth no plummet has since fully sounded, is found in Psalm twenty-third ! How striking, and how Christian withal, the solution of the mystery of individual immortality conveyed in the words : "Whom have I in heaven *but Thee!* . . . My flesh and my heart faileth ; God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." First a house, then a church, is the maxim of our critics. But surely here is an altar and holiest worship, souls who pant after God. Here are

songs in every key, from the tumultuous depths to serenest heights, and hearts to feel them and voices to sing them. And here is He who dwelleth not in temples made with hands; who inhabiteth the praises of Israel; and dwelleth with him that is of a contrite heart and who trembleth at his word. E. C. B.

The Psalms lift us into a purer air than psalmists themselves ever breathed. The authors of these sacred songs touched the chords of a finer human heart than that which beat in their own breasts or those of their contemporaries. The Psalms presuppose men to use them, full of the sense of sin and the blessedness of reconciliation—rejoicing in God—seeking for inward purity—gentle, tender, childlike. This anticipation of the Christian character, so long before Pentecost—this provision of fitting utterance for all the moods of Christian sanctity—is a continuous prophecy ever fulfilling itself in the Church. Every single Christian man who thus, as Athanasius wrote to Marcellinus, “thoroughly perceives and learns the affections of his own soul in the Psalter,” finds in himself a separate witness of the Psalms to Christianity. “The Psalmists,” said Donne, “were not only clear prophets of *Christ*, but of every *particular Christian*. They foretold what I, what any, shall do, and suffer, and say.” *Bishop Alexander*.—Judged only by the clear thought they create, the pure emotion they kindle, the love of right they inflame, the energy they infuse, the Psalms are positively unmatched in the whole literary expression of the world. Like magnets, they have attracted to the acceptance of the highest ideals, and sustained the bravest as they have forgotten what was behind and striven to reach the mark of the prize of their high calling of God in Christ Jesus. The family has been sanctified by their purity, the weary refreshed by their sweetness, and the hopeless revived by their light. Old and young, the living and the dying, have drunk from this perennial fount of the waters of everlasting life, and lived forevermore. *Clifford*.

AS RELATED TO THE LAW.

Not one inharmonious note do we discover in the Psalms of David and his successors, not one element of discord. The singer “Asaph” was known not only as Levite, but also as prophet. The sons of Korah, recognized as Levites of the Levites, are recognized in their productions as first of all Israelites. Their songs are strikingly national in tone. They honor the sanctuary, but in no spirit of ecclesiasticism. Both, like Ethan, are significantly introduced as David’s

singers. They sing in his measures. They reflect his spirit. They teach his doctrine. To find any marked cleavage-lines dividing these compositions such as is supposed to exist in the law; to find opposing tendencies and dissentient opinions on such matters as the cultus, the history, the moral and political outlook, the dangers, the goal of Israel, we will venture to say is impossible. Priestly, kingly, and prophetic elements are found mingling in every part and blending without disharmony. It is “Asaph,” perhaps, who makes most of God as Judge. It is the “sons of Korah” who chiefly exalt Him as King. It is David who strikes every chord in the gamut and in an ethical and doctrinal, as well as an historical, sense is, above all others, the “sweet psalmist of Israel.” E. C. B.

The relation of the Psalms to the *legal sacrifices* is different from what we would naturally expect. It is true there are not wanting passages in which the offering of the outward, legal sacrifice is recognized as a taking part in religious worship on the part of the individual and the Church; but those passages are more numerous, in which the external sacrifice appears as something not really desired by God at all, as a shell that should be cast away, as a form that should be broken in pieces. It is not this, however, that surprises us. This is the very point, wherein the Psalms contribute their share toward the progress of the history of redemption; it is the process of writing the law upon the heart, commenced already in Deuteronomy, that is continued here upon the ground of the memorable word of Samuel (1 Sam. 15 : 22); it is the gradually waxing spirit of the New Testament that in this and in other respects in the Psalter is breaking down the legal barriers. But what is put in the place of the sacrifices that are criticised so disparagingly? Contrition of heart, prayer, thankfulness, self-surrender to God in the doing of His will; just as in Prov. 21 : 3, doing justly; in Hos. 6 : 6, kindness; in Micah 6 : 6-8, doing justly, love, humility; and in Jer. 7 : 21-23, obedience. This is what is surprising. The sacrifice that is depreciated is looked upon merely as a symbol, not as a type; it is regarded only ethically, not in its connection with the history of redemption; it is only so far as it is a gift to God, not so far as the gift is appointed to be an expiation, that its character is brought out. Speaking generally, the sacrifice of blood, as such, remains a question in the Old Testament, to which almost only Isa. 53 (in addition to Zech. 12 : 10 and 13 : 7) gives a plain answer that is in keeping with the historical fulfilment. It is in such late prophetic words as

these that the delineation of the Passion and the self-sacrifice of Christ first becomes the subject of direct prediction ; and it is the history of the fulfilment given in the Gospels that first shows how closely in keeping with the Anti-type was the form that the Spirit, which spoke through David in his passion Psalms, gave to the utterances of the type regarding himself. In regard to reconciliation as well as redemption in general, the believing confidence of the Old Testament, as it expresses itself in the Psalms, rested upon Jehovah. He is not only the Saviour, but also the Reconciler, from whom propitiation is entreated and hoped for (79 : 9 ; 65 : 4 ; 78 : 38 ; 85 : 3, etc.). At the end of the way which He took through history to redemption Jehovah is indeed God in Christ, and the blood that was given by Him as a typical means of propitiation is, in the Anti-type, that of the God-man, and so far His own. D.

There is indeed little or nothing in all the Book of Psalms of the ceremonial law. Though sacrifice and offering were yet to continue many ages, yet they are here represented as things which God did not desire (Psalms 40 : 6 ; 51 : 16), as things comparatively little, and which in time were to vanish away. But the word and law of God, those parts of it which are moral and of perpetual obligation, are here all along magnified and made honorable, nowhere more. And Christ, the Crown and Centre of revealed religion, the Foundation, Corner, and Top-stone of that blessed building, is here clearly spoken of in type and prophecy ; both His sufferings and the glory that should follow, and the kingdom that He should set up in the world, which God's covenant with David concerning his kingdom was to have its accomplishment in. What a high value does this book put upon the word of God, His statutes and judgments, His covenant, and the great and precious promises of it ; and how does it recommend them to us as our guide and stay, and our heritage forever ! H.

AS RELATED TO O. T. HISTORY AND PROPHECY.

The Book of Psalms bears both on the historic and the prophetic elements of the Old Testament, and so forms a link in the integrity and unity of its structure. The historic Psalms, such as the seventy-eighth, the hundred and fifth, the hundred and sixth, the hundred and thirty-fifth, and hundred and thirty-sixth, whatever may be their date, are of priceless value, because they serve to confirm the substantial truth of the national records. They are an in-

dependent witness to the salient points of the national history. It is important to observe the limit at which these historical summaries respectively end. The first goes no farther than the reign of David, who may have been still king when it was written. The second ends with the occupation of Canaan. The third is doubtful, as it may either embrace the period of the judges, or may be a review of the entire history down to the close of the monarchy, though the former is more likely. The fifth and sixth go no farther than the wars of Joshua, if so far. It is not possible to pronounce with certainty on the date of these Psalms, but there can be no doubt that from their contents a presumption exists in favor of their high antiquity, as it would have been natural in any late writer to carry down his allusions to the history nearer to his own time, which it is manifest has not been done. But in proportion to the antiquity of these Psalms is the value of their independent witness to the history of the nation. And the mere fact of their *silence* as to any events of which we have not the written record, is a strong reason for inferring that this record was in existence at the time when they were written, and a proof that it was deeply imprinted on the memory of the people. It is this double stream of historical narration, and of national poetry corroborating it, that is so characteristic of the Hebrew literature, and that is at once unique in the Old Testament, and an evidence of its structural unity. *S. Leathes.*

These marvellous compositions are indissolubly bound up with the Israelitish history. There are hardly a dozen of them—whether of the narrative, the didactic, or the lyrical class—which do not either derive from that history some element of their power, or presuppose it as the basis of all the thought and the spring of all the feeling that is in them. Some of the most stirring portions of the Psalter are little else than the great historical events of the Pentateuch in their devotional aspect—as if the sweet singers of Israel, reading the Pentateuch with wonder and joy, had chanted forth its leading incidents with the thoughts which they inspired in their burning bosoms, and thus turned all into a hymnal. As for those Psalms which are strictly personal—embodying the varying emotions of him whose name is associated with the entire collection, recording the hopes and fears, the joys and sorrows, the struggles and reliefs of his eventful history, as if they had come fresh from his pen from day to day as he went through them, and stretching as they do over the most glorious period of the Israelitish

history, from the first establishment of the royalty till it rose to its zenith on the accession of Solomon—this large class of the Psalms has positively no meaning at all, apart from the History; insomuch, that if you give up the authenticity of the history, not only will the religion be found to have dissolved with it, but the life and soul and sense even of the poetry will have lost all power of stirring the heart. But if the Old Testament history be genuine and reliable history, the question whether the Hebrew faith is supernatural and divine is settled; for that history is nothing else than a record of supernatural communications made to men, and of men's treatment of them; of stupendous supernatural occurrences, for the purpose of forming into a nation the recipients of those divine communications and establishing them in a land of their own; of institutions divinely framed for hedging up this nation, and of fresh communications made to them from time to time as depositaries of the true faith, and witnesses for the living God to the nations around, until a destined period should arrive when this faith should take a brighter form, and burst its narrow bounds, and fill the whole earth.

One other prominent feature of the Psalms must not be passed by—the constant reference in them to a *written Word*, by the faith of which the psalmists were nurtured into intelligent and spiritual subjection to the God of their fathers, and by devout meditation on which their souls were attuned to those lofty strains which have furnished a matchless liturgy for all ages, all lands, all classes alike. This written Word was beyond all doubt just the Pentateuch—called variously “the law of the Lord,” His “statutes,” “commandments,” “testimonies,” “judgments,” etc. On this *Word* the whole religious life of believers turned, as on a pivot. “Oh, how I love *thy law*! It is my meditation all the day. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for *thy testimonies* are my meditation. Great peace have they who love *thy law*, and nothing shall offend them. My lips shall utter praise when thou hast taught me *thy statutes*.” Thus, as the religious life of these sweet singers of Israel began with faith in this “law of the Lord”—the written record of God's revelations to men from the beginning—so their stability in the ways of God, their recovery from backsliding, their triumph over all that would separate between God and them, and their assurance forever, were *all built on that Word*, on which, as their divinely provided ladder, their souls rose to God as their refuge and strength in every time of trouble. “In the multitude of

my thoughts within me *thy comforts* delight my soul.” “Unless *thy law* had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction. I will never forget *thy precepts*; for with them thou hast quickened me. Nay, they confidently expect that Word to *subjugate the whole world to God whenever the time shall arrive for its universal proclamation*. “All the kings of the earth shall praise Thee, O Lord, *when they hear the words of Thy mouth*.” D. Brown.

AS RELATED TO MESSIANIC PROMISE AND PROPHECY.

It is a question fairly under discussion, on what principle Psalms in whole or part are Messianic—*i.e.*, whether they are direct predictions of Jesus Christ to come, or indirect, in this sense, that they are originally and properly written of David or Solomon, and are found applicable to Christ, because David and Solomon were types of Him. To us it appears that these theories are not so opposed as to exclude each other, and there is no reason why both should not be true. The latter explanation best suits some of the Messianic passages, while others require the former theory. D. F.—All sober interpreters since the time of the Reformation, following the guidance of Luther and Calvin, have avoided both extremes of error. On the one hand, they have recognized the existence of the Messianic element; on the other, they have abandoned those strained and fanciful interpretations by which violence is done to the plain language of many Psalms, when they are regarded as predictive of our Lord. Still much difference of opinion exists, more especially among English commentators, as to the principle of interpretation to be followed in those Psalms which are confessedly Messianic. One class of expositors, of whom Bishop Horsley may be taken as a chief representative, have laid it down as a certain principle, that whenever any part of a Psalm is by any of the writers of the New Testament applied to our Lord, there we are bound to explain the whole Psalm as prophetic of Him. Nay, every Psalm, it has been contended, which may reasonably be held, even without express New Testament sanction, to be Messianic, is Messianic in all its parts, from first to last. But, in the first place, this canon of interpretation fails, because it, at least tacitly, assumes that in all these Psalms the writer is consciously uttering a prediction; that the Psalmist, although he is speaking, it may be, in some lower sense of himself, has ever consciously before the eye of his mind One greater than he, in whom he knew that his words would find their

ultimate fulfilment. But there is no proof that such is the case, but rather the reverse. In the next place, the difficulties involved in this canon of interpretation are far more serious than those which it is intended to surmount. It compels us constantly to take words and phrases in a sense which is obviously not their proper and natural sense. Besides these inherent difficulties, the canon has all analogy against it, as well as the authority of the New Testament writers. It has analogy against it; for no one thinks of expounding the prophetic books in this manner. Thus, no one contends that because part of a prophecy is Messianic, therefore every portion of it must be Messianic. But, in the next place, the invariable practice of the New Testament writers overthrows the canon referred to, and establishes for us a safe and consistent rule of interpretation. *Never does any writer of the New Testament, evangelist or apostle, never does our Lord Himself, sanction the application of any passage of the Old Testament to Him in which the writer confesses and deplores his own sinfulness.* This fact of itself ought to be a guide to us in our interpretation. It is a beacon against the shoals and quicksands of human error. Frequently and freely as the New Testament writers cite passages from the Old Testament, and especially from the Psalms, as fulfilled in Christ—some, perhaps, which, without their authority, we should hardly have dared so to interpret—they most cautiously abstain from that perversion of language which in modern theology has been pushed to such an extreme. To them it would have seemed nothing short of an awful profanation to have spoken of the sins laid upon Christ as His sins. They would never have thought it possible to speak of Him as a sinner, who to them was the Holy One of God. Words which expressed devotedness, self-sacrifice, high and holy aspirations, these they felt, and we all feel, however true in some sense of a righteous Israelite of old, uttering them in the communion of his heart with God, and carried beyond himself while he uttered them, were infinitely truer, yea, only true in the fullest sense, of Him who came not to do His own will, but the will of Him who sent Him. Hence these, even where no direct prediction was intended, were more fitting in His mouth than in theirs. So likewise the language of sorrow, the cry poured out from the depths of a troubled spirit, however truly expressive of the feelings of a pious Jew bowed down by calamities, persecutions, miseries untold, never came with so true a force of utterance from any lips as from the lips of Him

whose sorrows and whose sufferings were such as it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive.

What, then, is the conclusion at which we arrive from these observed facts? Surely it is this: That the Psalms to a large extent foreshadow Christ, because the writers of the Psalms are types of Christ. And it is of the very nature of a type to be imperfect. It foretells in some particulars, but not in all, that of which it is the type. Were it complete in itself, it would not point further; through its very incompleteness it becomes a prophecy. Now, the Psalms are typical. They are the words of holy men of old—of one especially, whose life was fashioned in many of its prominent features to be a type of Christ. But just as David's *whole* life was not typical of Christ, so neither were all his words. His suffering and his humiliation first, and his glory afterward, were faint and passing and evanescent images of the life of Him who was both Son of David and Son of God. But the sorrowful shadow of pollution which passed upon David's life, that was not typical, and, therefore, the words in which it was confessed are not typical or predictive, or capable of application to our Lord. Once let us firmly grasp this idea, that any Psalm in which a suffering saint of God under the Old Testament addresses God has but a typical reference to Christ, where it has any such reference at all, and we are freed at once from all embarrassment of interpretation. Then we can say without hesitation: Every word in that Psalm is the true expression of the feelings of him who wrote it; the suffering is a real suffering; the sorrow is a real sorrow; the aspiration, so high, so heavenly, is a real aspiration; the joy and the triumph of deliverance are real; the confession of sin comes from a heart to which sin is a real burden. But the sorrow, the suffering, the aspiration, the joy, the triumph—all but the sin—never found all their fulness of meaning save in the life and on the lips of the Perfect Man.

Another great advantage of this system of interpretation is, that it not only saves us from a forced and unnatural interpretation of language in particular instances, but that it falls in so completely with the whole history of the Old Testament. That history is throughout typical. We have the key to its meaning in that quotation by the evangelist Matthew: "Out of Egypt have I called my son." The history of Israel and the history of Christ are, in a certain sense, one. And as the history of Israel was fashioned to be typical of the history of redemp-

tion, in its capital features, so the history of the great representative characters in Israel was designed to foreshadow, each in some distinct particular, the life of Christ. Christ our Lord is prophet, priest, and king. All these offices find their highest significance in Him ; and, accordingly, those who bore these offices in the Mosaic economy were, in their several degrees, types of Christ. Of these three principal figures in the Jewish typical system, two appear prominently in the Psalms, the prophet and the king. This is what might be expected. The priest was typical by his acts rather than by his words. And sacrifice and ritual might be enjoined and described in the law, but they find no place in the Psalms. They are mentioned only to be depreciated. Hence in one Psalm only does Messiah appear as priest, and there He is both king and priest. There, moreover, He stands as a priest after the order of Melchisedec, and not after the order of Aaron. But with regard to the other two offices—those of prophet and king—the Messianic Psalms may be divided into two classes, according as they are represented by the one or the other of these two characters.

1. *Prediction of the Messiah as King.* We have a series of Psalms—the second, the twentieth, the twenty-first, the forty-fifth, the seventy-second, the hundred and tenth—in all of which a king is celebrated. In one Psalm a king is described who goes forth conquering and to conquer ; in another, a king whose reign is a reign of righteousness and peace. In another, the occasion of the royal nuptials has been selected as the subject. In all, some Jewish monarch, either on his accession or at some critical period of his reign, is the immediate object before the eyes of the inspired poet. But in all the monarch grows larger and fairer than the sons of men. He is seen ever in the light of the promise made to David, and in that light he is transfigured. Human he is, no doubt ; many words spoken of him pertain only to a human king ; but many also are higher ; many cannot, except by force of exaggeration, be made to apply to one who wears the frailty together with the form of man. There is but one interpretation by which the apparently discordant elements in these Psalms can be held together. It is that according to which the Psalms are regarded not as simply predictive, but as properly typical in their character.

2. *As Prophet and Sufferer.* Many other Psalms there are which, in the New Testament, are said to have their fulfilment in the sufferings of Christ. In these, again, the writer himself is a type of Christ, and he is so in his character

as a prophet, or preacher of righteousness. In all these Psalms a servant of God appears as a sufferer, and a sufferer for righteousness' sake ; often, indeed, confessing that he suffers the just punishment of his sins *at the hands of God*, but always complaining that he is unjustly persecuted *of men*. In such Psalms, more particularly, as the twenty-second and sixty-ninth we find, moreover, language used which implies that the sufferer occupies a prominent position, and that he is, in some sense, the representative of Israel in his sufferings. The issue of those sufferings is to be a subject of joy and thanksgiving, not to himself only, but to all who, like himself, fear God, and endure persecution for His name's sake. Hence the Psalmist, both as prophet and as righteous sufferer, is a type of Christ ; for every Jewish prophet or preacher was also conspicuous as a sufferer, a martyr for the truth. But we never find these two characters—that of the suffering prophet and the victorious king—united in the same Psalm. This, of itself, is surely remarkable. This, of itself, teaches us how purely typical the Psalms are, so far as their Messianic import is concerned. Everywhere we find imperfection ; everywhere only a partial representation of that which could not as yet be conceived of in its completeness. Lastly, there is another remarkable circumstance, which lends ample confirmation to the view here advocated. It is this. Nowhere in the Psalms are the redemption of the world and Israel's final glory bound up with the coming of the Messiah. The Messiah is, for a time at least, associated with the present, and only with the present. The anointed of God is David, or Solomon, till both the one and the other fail to fulfil the longings of men's hearts. But the advent to which Israel looks forward is the advent of JEHOVAH. It is He who is Israel's true King. It is His coming which shall be her redemption and her glory ; but His coming is never identified with the coming of the Messiah. The earthly hope and the heavenly run on in parallel lines, but they never meet. In the light of the New Testament only do we see how David's Son is also his Lord.

All these facts, then, point in one direction. The fact that the Messiah and the Divine Deliverer are not as yet seen by the Psalmists to be the same ; the fact that the king and the sufferer are two, not one ; the fact that the New Testament writers never quote confessions of sinfulness as in any way applicable to Christ, whilst they do quote other words expressive of devotion or suffering as so applicable—all these tend to the same conclusion, namely, that

whilst all the great characters of Israelitish history are typical of Him, they are so only partially and imperfectly. Hence we can freely and safely adopt this principle of interpretation in all cases. We can see in every Psalm which may reasonably be regarded as Messianic, a primary reference to the writer and to his own circumstances; and, so far as confessions of sin meet us, an exclusive reference; whereas in all else, without maintaining a conscious prophecy, we can recognize the language of a type waiting its proper accomplishment in the antitype. P.

The Royal Messiah. Psalms 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 61, 72, 89, 110, 132. The kingdom of Israel was at once the expression of God's purpose to establish a universal kingdom upon earth, and the means for the accomplishment of that purpose. The people of Israel was Jehovah's Son, His first-born, and His servant; and the Davidic king as the representative of the nation was Jehovah's Son, His first-born, and His servant. He was no despot, reigning in his own right, but the "anointed of Jehovah," who was the true King of Israel, appointed by Him as His viceroy and representative.

The Suffering Messiah. Psalms 22, 35, 41, 55, 69, 109. Men's minds had to be prepared not only for a triumphant King, but for a suffering Saviour. The great prophecy of Isa. 52, 53 finds preludes and echoes in what may be called the *Passion Psalms*. The sufferings of David and other saints of the old dispensation were typical; they helped to familiarize men with the thought of the righteous suffering for God's sake, of suffering as the path to victory, of glory to be won for God and deliverance for man through suffering. A. F. K.

If the Psalms contain not the narratives of Messiah's birth, and life, and death, where, in the whole Scriptures, can we find such declarations of the work of Christ, in its humiliation and its glory, the spiritual agonies of His death, the glorious issues of His resurrection, the wrestling of His kingdom with the powers of darkness, its triumph over the heathen, and the overthrow of all its enemies until the heads of many lands shall have been wounded, and the people made willing in the day of His power? *Irving.*

THE HOPE OF ETERNAL LIFE IN THE PSALMS.

The Psalms, which are so full of the experiences and hopes of David, and other holy men of old, while they express only fear and discomfort in regard to the state after death, not unfrequently point to the resurrection from the dead as the great consummation of desire and

expectation: "Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave; or He shall receive me"—thus expressing belief, not only in a prolonged existence in Sheol, but in an ultimate return from its chambers. The prophets, who are nearly silent regarding the state of the disembodied soul, speak even more explicitly of a resurrection from the dead, and evidently connect with it the brightest hopes of the Church. P. F.

In a half-dozen passages in the Psalms the hope of everlasting life casts its light upon the present. In this, as in all things else, God's revelation was gradual. At no time could they who trusted in God and loved Him dream that their trust and love were only for this world. But in the life of Abraham, nothing is said of his hope after death. In the life of Moses it is the same. With David the hope begins to assert itself; it is not, indeed, clear; it speaks in no certain accents; but still it wears the aspect, and utters the voice, of a hope. It is a hope of that which *may* be, rather than of that which *shall* be; but yet, even in its weakness, it tramples upon the world and time and death. With Isaiah this hope becomes clearer. Ezekiel, in the parable of a national resurrection, draws his image from the resurrection of the dead. Daniel asserts it in language which cannot be mistaken. From this time onward it becomes an undoubted article of Jewish belief. They who deny it are counted for a sect, and our Lord confutes them with an unanswerable argument drawn from the books of Moses. Finally, by His resurrection, life and immortality were brought to light; and from the days of the apostles to the present hour, Jesus and the resurrection have been the prominent subjects of all Christianity, and a future life the most consoling hope in all times of affliction, and in the presence of death. But it was otherwise with the fathers of the Jewish Church. God was teaching them the capital truth on which all other truth was to rest, that He, and nothing else, was their sufficient portion. "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward," this was His great word to Abraham. It was by this that Abraham lived. All else was promise; this was present possession. The promised land he could never call his own; the promised seed was given to him only to be demanded back by Him who gave it. The whole discipline of Abraham's life had this purpose in it: to lead

him to find the everlasting God, his strength, his portion, his all. He was called "the friend of God;" and he who had God for his friend could need, could have, nothing more; for all was implied in this. On this fact Abraham's life was built; on this the lives of all his true children. The Jews were not merely designed to be witnesses to the world of the unity of God. They were this, no doubt; but they were far more. They were witnesses to a better truth—that the eternal God loves men, and calls them his children and his friends, and that men can be, and know themselves to be, his friends and his children. It is of this truth that the Psalms are full. They give proof in every verse of the reality of a communion and fellowship between the living God and His creatures. The poetry of the Hebrews, it has been well said, is a "poetry of friendship between God and man." And it seems to have been designed that the truth of this divine communion should stand alone in its grandeur, because it is upon this that man's life must be built. We must rest upon the broad foundation of faith before we can have the hope which maketh not ashamed. If hope is the anchor within the veil, faith is the victory which overcometh the world. We cannot wonder, therefore, that so little, comparatively, is said of a future life in the Psalms. It was not yet time. God was training his children to lean only upon Him. When the fulness of the time was come, the veil was rent away, paradise opened, and the church militant made one with the church triumphant. P.

In the view of the psalmists, death and life are such radical notions (notions, that is to say, apprehended by them as rooted in the principles of divine wrath and divine love) that it is easy for New Testament faith, to which they have been fully disclosed even to their background in hell and heaven, to adjust and deepen all the utterances in the Psalms that refer to them. It is by no means contrary to the mind of the psalmist, if in such passages as 6 : 6 the New Testament suppliant substitutes Gehenna for Hades; for the psalmists dread Hades only as being the realm of wrath or of separation from God's love, which is the true life of men. Nor is it contrary to the mind of the poets to think in 17 : 15 of the future beholding of the face of God in all His glory, and in 49 : 15 of the resurrection morning; for the hopes that are expressed there in a spiritually exalted condition of soul are really, so far as regards their truly satisfying fulfilment, hopes that belong to the future life. As Oetinger says, there is no essen-

tial New Testament truth that is not contained in the Psalms, if not in its unfolded sense, at least in the spirit. The Old Testament barrier already encompasses the gradually developing life of the New Testament, which is one day to break through it. The eschatology of the Old Testament leaves a dark background, which is laid out, as it were, to be divided by the New Testament revelation into light and darkness, and to be lit up into a wide perspective that extends into the eternity that lies beyond time. Wherever it begins to dawn in the eschatological darkness of the Old Testament, it is already the first morning rays of the sunrise of the New, that is thus announcing itself. In this respect also the Christian cannot refrain from disregarding the barrier of the psalmists, and understanding the Psalms according to the mind of the Spirit, who, even during the development of redemption and of the knowledge of it, kept the goal and the consummation steadily in view. Thus understood the Psalms are hymns of the Israel of the New Testament no less than of that of the Old. The Church, when it uses the language of the Psalms as supplications, celebrates the unity of the two Testaments, and science, when expounding them, does honor to the distinction between the Old and the New. They are both in the right; the former in regarding the Psalms in the light of the one essential salvation, the latter in keeping apart the sacred eras, and the various stages through which the knowledge of salvation has passed. D.

IMPRECATORY PSALMS.

The Scripture imprecations do not belong to any one period nor any one individual, race, or country. They stretch along the whole line of revelation from Moses and David to Paul and John, from the Pentateuch to the Apocalypse. They not only cover the entire period of God's revelation to man, but extend their sweeping condemnations and judgments to the material and spiritual, the temporal and eternal, interests of the enemies of God and His people. Not one of these imprecations is local or personal. Each and all belong to one vast system, and in each and every instance the who utters the imprecation is completely identified with God, and speaks as His representative, and denounces woe upon, not his private and personal enemies, but the enemies of God. If they were in every case the *representatives of God*, if they spake His mind, then the case is cleared of many difficulties, and the true ground of complaint is that God should feel and speak thus concerning any por-

tion of the human race. The wish expressed for the destruction of the enemies of God and His people was realized. Israel's enemies were time and again punished with defeat and slaughter. For their sins they were given over to be destroyed, and the imprecation was the prophetic announcement of their doom. The imprecation is never uttered until the case is hopeless, until the sin is incurable. How David or Jeremiah could love the sinner whom they devoted to destruction is just the old problem of how God can love the sinner and punish him for his sins. The spirit of all these imprecations is simply righteous abhorrence of all unatoned, unpardoned, unrepented, and incurable sin, the holy hatred on the part of God and all godlike spirits of sin. And still more light is thrown upon this subject when we remember that God is ceaselessly doing with incurable sinners what Moses, Job, David, Jeremiah, and Paul asked him to do. The *mere expression* of a desire and purpose to punish sin is of insignificant importance compared with the deliberate and persistent *execution* of that purpose. In all human history God's enemies have been punished, and the Scriptures tell us plainly that they have been in the past. If men wish to find a God who will not punish sin, they will have to remove to some realm utterly unlike any of which the race has knowledge. *Pitzer.*

As regards the so-called imprecatory Psalms, it is certainly true that, in the attitude of the Christian and the Church to the enemies of Christ, the longing for their removal is outweighed by the longing for their conversion. On the assumption, however, that they will not be converted and will not anticipate the penal judgment by repenting, the passing over of the jealousy of love into that of anger is justified also in the New Testament (*e.g.*, Gal. 5 : 12); and on the assumption that their obduracy has become absolute, even the Christian need not shrink from praying for their ultimate overthrow. For the kingdom of God does not come only by the way of grace, but also by the way of judgment; the coming of God's kingdom is what is longed for by the suppliant of the Old Testament as well as of the New; and in the Psalms also every imprecation of judgment upon those who set themselves to oppose the coming of this kingdom is made upon the assumption of their persistent impenitence. D.

The Psalmist was inspired to delineate and denounce the sins of his own and of other times with a knowledge and a certainty which the uninspired mind cannot possess. While, therefore, we may learn grave and salutary lessons

from him concerning the exceeding sinfulness of sin, it is plain that we can only detect the sinner so far as the poet himself has pointed him out. We may read with solemn awe the depths of evil which he condemns, but we can neither search the heart nor take upon us to judge our neighbor. These high functions we must leave to the Judge of all the earth. All that we shall do will be to concur sadly and solemnly in the sentence which the eternal Judge will pronounce in that strange work of judgment which the entrance of sin has compelled Him to perform. If any transgressor, reading the awful doom of ungodliness in these Psalms, will repent, the sentence of judgment melts into the accents of pardon and the entire future of the soul is reversed. After all, then, there is not in these few awful Psalms an irreversible path of perdition set before the offender; but a firm, faithful, terrible warning, to which if he will but give heed his soul will escape forever. Behind the dark cloud of a premonitory curse lies the bright light of a present and perpetual blessing, concealed, indeed, from the stony look of haughty ungodliness, but open to the soft eye of penitent faith. M.—We are justified in saying that the imprecations in the Psalms, though springing from a righteous zeal for the glory of God, and not from any mere thirst of personal revenge, still are not such as a Christian can lawfully, in their natural sense, use now. They may have their lesson for us, nevertheless. They may show us what zeal for God is; how it consumes one who is truly filled by it. They may be a warning against laxity of belief, indifference, softness of spirit, even whilst we know that our zeal is to be a zeal of love, not of hate; our fervor a fervor of devotion to God rather than of opposition even to those whom we may count to be His enemies. The imprecations which may not pass over our lips where even one of God's enemies is concerned, may still remind us that there is a holy jealousy of love, may rouse us to greater moral earnestness, may rebuke us, and put us to shame because we are neither cold nor hot. P.

It would be of no avail, if we were permitted, to render certain passages in a declaratory or prophetic sense which are now rendered as indicating a wish or desire. The difficulty would exist elsewhere in its full extent. It is hardly necessary to say that the affirmation itself, in regard to the Hebrew language, is untenable. There are forms of the verb in Hebrew, and there are connected particles, which oblige us to translate by the terms *let*, *may*, and others which are expressive of wish or desire. Often, too,

the context will not justify any other rendering.

Another way in which it has been attempted to remove the difficulty is to consider it as a peculiarity of the old dispensation, as one of the things engrafted upon the Mosaic economy which the Christian dispensation does not recognize; as consonant with the general spirit of the Jewish theocracy, but which a clearer revelation would annul. But God is the author of these dispensations, and the general spirit of the two must be the same. We ought not to vindicate one Testament at the expense of the other. What is essentially bad at one period must be so at all times. It is no less wrong for Joshua to indulge in malice toward the Canaanites than it is for the Apostle Paul toward Nero. Cruelty is no more tolerated in the Pentateuch than it is in the Epistle. He has not been a careful reader of the Book of Deuteronomy who has not observed the special pains which God took to impress upon the hearts of the Israelites the importance of treating kindly not only the widow and the orphan, but the stranger, the Egyptian, the hired servant who was not of their own nation. No small part of the Levitical law is taken up with commands and appeals designed to counteract the narrow and selfish spirit of the Hebrews. Besides, the principle runs through the entire Scriptures, the New Testament as well as the Old. "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil. May the Lord reward him according to his works!" It is not easy to see how this differs materially from the imprecations in the Book of Psalms.

It has been supposed by some that the passages in question are to be understood in a spiritual sense; that the reference to individuals is not real but imaginary, assumed for the time being, and for an ultimate purpose wholly different from what lies on the face of them—that is, we are to apply these various maledictions to our spiritual foes, imprecating on them the terrible calamities which were apparently, but only apparently, intended for the personal enemies of the sacred writers. The simple statement of such a position is enough to show its absurdity. If Doeg, Ahithophel, and Alexander the coppersmith were not real persons, what were they? Besides, whither would such a principle of interpretation carry us? B. B. E.

Undoubtedly a certain number of passages are not defensive, they are denunciatory; such as 54 : 5, 7; 59 : 10; 92 : 11; 143 : 12. This last verse brings into view the sentiment which forms the base of all these passages: "And of

Thy goodness slay mine enemies, and destroy all them that vex my soul, *for I am Thy servant.*" If we put these words into paraphrase, the Psalmist pleads that he is engaged in the service of God; that in this service he is assailed and hindered; that, powerless in himself, he appeals to the source of power; and that he invokes upon the assailants and hinderers of the Divine work the Divine vengeance, even to their extinction. There is not one of these passages which tampers with truth or justice; they are aimed at sin, to blast and wither it. "Lead me, O Lord, in Thy righteousness, because of mine enemies" (Psalm 5 : 8). This is the universal strain. All these passages are strokes delivered with the sword of righteousness, in its unending warfare with iniquity. Nor is there one among them of which it can be shown that they refer to personal feuds, passions, or desires. Everywhere the Psalmist speaks in the name of God, on behalf of His word and will.

But it may be said that such denunciations are excessive in degree, that they are too severe. With respect to their severity, I suggest, and if need be contend, that we in our ignorance and weakness are no fit judges of the extent to which the wisdom of the Almighty may justly carry the denunciation and the punishment of guilt. Man, and even civilized man, contemplates with much equanimity the taking of human life for the occasions which he deems sufficient. He knows that in all wars one party must be guilty, and that in most or many wars neither have had a justification for the wholesale bloodshed which floods the path of destruction that they necessarily follow. Life, which he did not give and cannot restore, he takes away for the repression of crime, with general though not unanimous approval. It is also taken, even now, in most Christian countries, through duels for private injury or insult. But the scruples, which for ourselves we so easily thrust aside, become active, feverish, and even violent, when, in a world to the abundant wickedness of which our own practice witnesses, the Ruler of that world, who gave life for use, and who sees and judges its abuse, is to be arraigned before our mock tribunal; and we who cannot and do not rightly guide each our own action, are to undertake to determine His. And this when we have not fully learned and cannot measure either the deep and frightful depravity of the Canaanitish nations, or the purposes with which penalty descends. We know not whether it comes in mercy to correct the growth of evil before it shall become incurable, and whether or how far, when opportunity had been ex-

hausted here, resources may still have been held in reserve to be expended for good in the great elsewhere. To pronounce verdicts upon these terrible denunciations may be impious, and is surely at the least unreasonable. *W. E. Gladstone.*

There is a principle that, I think, must be regarded as a justification of the passages in question. The principle may be best stated by three or four illustrations. Doeg, an Edomite herdsman, in the time of Saul, killed eighty-five unarmed, helpless priests, when he knew that they were wholly innocent of the charge made against them, and when no one else dared to touch these consecrated servants of the Lord. But with this he was not satisfied; every woman and child, every breathing thing, fell under the assassin's knife. Now the very mention of the atrocity stirs up feelings in us which cannot be repressed, and which are only rendered the more poignant by reflection on the attendant circumstances. The murder of the children at Bethlehem, by Herod, another Edomite, was an act of gratuitous cruelty, which the imagination utterly refuses to carry out into its details. The horrors of conscience that he suffered on account of his murder of his wife Mariamne, and which almost antedated those pains that shall never have an end, do not awaken for him the slightest degree of sympathy. A happy end to that turbulent life would have shocked us. The woman that wished the head of the venerable forerunner of our Lord to be brought to her in a basin—who desired to enjoy a sight which would have curdled the blood of any one else—has excited a feeling in every reader's breast that no lapse of time has in the least degree diminished. The simple words of the Gospel are enough. We wish not a word of commentary. Every right-minded man has one, on the living fibres of his heart. The striking of a great bell at midnight in Paris was the signal of a deed at which men shudder now, at the distance of four hundred years. It was an outrage upon the nature which God has given to His creatures, which admits of no apology, and which necessarily demanded an atonement. And there are those who, in the horrors of the French Revolution, beheld the cup of retribution pressed to the lips of the nation stained with this blood; and when they saw her compelled to drink the very dregs, they felt that a debt to divine justice had been paid, God's moral government had been vindicated, and His word had come to pass—"They who sowed the wind *had* reaped the whirlwind."

Now, what is the character of the principle

thus manifested? what the nature of the emotions with which such transactions as these are regarded? A primary element of it is *indignation*. Before we have had time to reflect there is an instant, a spontaneous burst of anger toward the wrong-doer. We cannot prevent it if we would. It is prior to all deliberation. In its first outbreak it is beyond control. It is outraged nature, and will have vent. Another element is *compassion* toward the injured party. We have an instinctive pity for weakness crushed to the dust, for innocence betrayed and violated. The wailing cry of infancy is in our ears; the white locks of age draggling in the dust are in our sight. Another and principal ingredient is a sense of *justice*. When a crime of extraordinary atrocity goes unpunished, we feel that justice is defrauded of its dues. We are indignant that so great a wrong should go unredressed. While the crime is unatoned we have a feeling not only of insecurity, but that justice has been violated. Public order is disturbed. A shock has been given to that sense of rectitude which is common to man. *This* is not of momentary duration, as the indignant or compassionate feeling may be. It grows stronger with the lapse of time, and reflection only adds to its intensity. When a great outrage is perpetrated nothing will calm the perturbation of our moral nature but the infliction of a penalty. The grievance must be redressed. A voice within us calls imperatively for reparation, whether we or others are the authors of the deed. The endurance of suffering is an indispensable condition for the return of peace. We secretly desire the speedy infliction of the penalty on ourselves, if we are conscious of guilt, and on others, also, if they are the evil-doers. And what we crave by an irrepressible instinct of our moral nature, may we not, on fit occasions, *express in language*? Furthermore, this is an original principle of our nature. It has all the marks of being a simple and ultimate fact, which can be affirmed in relation to any attribute of our nature. In this respect it stands precisely on the ground of the other original properties of our constitution. Again, it is universal, and therefore original. It has shown itself in all ages, in every state of society and period of human life, among the rudest and the most refined. Wherever the voice of a brother's blood has cried from the ground, it has found an answering echo in every bosom.

It may be maintained, further, that this feeling is not necessarily accompanied with any malice or ill-will toward the sufferer. An atrocious crime is committed in our neighborhood;

we have the strongest sympathy for the injured party, and indignation toward the evil-doer. We unite in all proper measures to bring him to what we call a condign—that is, a deserved punishment. We rejoice when we learn that he has been apprehended, and that justice is permitted to take its appointed course. If we do not, in so many words, imprecate calamities upon him, we feel, and we perform, what amounts to the same thing. We ardently desire and pray that he may suffer punishment. If he is proved to be guilty, we are disappointed if he escape. We are even eager to co-operate in efforts to bring him within the arm of the law. But all this is not attended with any desire to witness the sufferings of a human being, or that those sufferings, in themselves, should be felt. We have no malice or private revenge to gratify. The absorbing emotion is for the good of society. We have the persuasion that if the criminal escapes the bonds that hold men together will be weakened, if they are not destroyed. That there may be this entire freedom from personal ill-will is shown by the fact that our feelings are precisely similar, in kind at least, toward an offending contemporary or neighbor, and toward a notorious culprit who lived ages ago, or may now live at the ends of the earth, and whose punishment or escape from it cannot possibly affect us personally. The utterance of this moral feeling is the utterance of humanity within us.

The connection of this original principle of our nature, which has been briefly developed, with the imprecations in the Psalms and in other parts of the Bible, is obvious. If it does not account for all, it still lies at the foundation of a large portion of them. In other words, these imprecatory passages are justified by a primary and innocent feeling of our nature. Were we placed in the condition of the sacred penmen, we should feel, and properly feel, as they felt. The feeling in the minds of those who penned the fifty-fifth and sixty-ninth Psalms was not malice. It was the indignation excited by cruelty and injustice, and the desire that crime should be punished. They, doubtless, followed the precept, Be ye angry, and sin not. If we were acquainted with the circumstances which called forth the imprecatory Psalms, we should doubtless find, as the cause or occasion, striking cases of treachery, practised villainy, and unblushing violations of law.

Our Saviour uttered awful anathemas against the hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees. These were authorized, not simply on the ground that he knew the hearts of men and, as Judge of the

world, had a right to anticipate the final sentence, but from the atrocity of their crimes. On account of the reputed sanctity of their characters, they were often made the depositaries for safe keeping of the pittance of widows, or they became guardians of the estates of orphans. These sacred funds, they artfully embezzled and appropriated to their personal use, while the helpless owner sought for redress in vain, because the judge in the case might be the swindler himself. No wonder our Saviour denounced the vengeance of Heaven on these sanctimonious thieves and repudiators. His anathemas were sanctioned by a feeling which we have in common with Him, and which, on extraordinary occasions, we not only cherish, but express or imply in language. If we had been fully possessed of the facts, and all the attendant circumstances, as He knew them, or as His disciples might, in a degree, have known them, we should have seen ample ground for His terrible denunciations. *B. B. Edwards.*

The truth seems to be, then, that it is only a morbid benevolence, a mistaken philanthropy, which takes offence at these Psalms; for in reality they are not opposed to the spirit of the Gospel, or to that love of enemies which our Lord enjoined. Resentment against evil-doers is so far from being sinful, that we find it exemplified in the meek and spotless Redeemer Himself, as when He looked around upon the Pharisees “with *anger*, being *grieved* for the hardness of their hearts.” If the emotion and its utterance were essentially sinful, how could Paul wish the enemy of Christ to be accursed; or say of his own enemy: “The Lord reward him according to his work?” How, then, could he say to the high priest, “God shall smite thee, thou whited wall,” or how could Peter say to Simon, the sorcerer: “Thy money perish with thee?” Above all, how, then, could the spirits of the just in heaven be represented as calling upon God for vengeance upon their enemies and persecutors? (Rev. 6:10) Assuredly it is not in the Old Testament only that God is set forth not only as a Father, but as a Judge and Vindicator—as one “angry with the wicked every day.” The God of the New Testament is also “a consuming fire;” and it is still “dreadful to fall into the hands of the living God;” and to those who fall away after having received the knowledge of the truth there is “a fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation to consume the adversaries.” The divine righteousness has indeed lost so little of its rigor under the new covenant that he who despises the far richer means of grace offered under it becomes

the heir of a much sorer punishment than he who perished under the old law (Heb. 10, 12). Let us be satisfied. The Bible, even here, where many have deemed it most vulnerable, most open to attack, does not stand in need of any apology. *Kitto.*

In thus briefly considering one of the sterner features of our constitution, and some of its practical developments, we cannot but be struck with the morbid type of much of the philanthropy and religion current at the present day. Love degenerates into weakness ; compassion becomes itself an object of pity ; benevolence is degraded into an indiscriminating instinct. The employment of force is branded as a relic of barbarous times. The exercise of authority is scouted as contrary to the spirit both of the Gospel and of an enlightened age. The world must now be controlled by persuasion. It was formerly supposed that law, with its rigorous penalty, was a chief instrument in moral reformations ; that it was one of the main elements in the means which God and man must employ in meliorating the state of society. So, likewise, in respect to religion. In our days, there is such a prominent and reiterated exhibition of the paternal character of God as to endanger, if not destroy, its legitimate effect on the character of His intelligent creatures. There is such a protrusion of the promises of the Bible, and such a concealment of its threatenings, as to neutralize the influence of both. Religion is sometimes so divested of its grander and sterner qualities as to fail to secure any respect. It becomes a mere collection of pleasant counsels, an assemblage of sweet recommendations, which it would be very well to observe ; instead of presenting, as it does, an alternative of life or death, an authoritative code of morals, a law with inflexible sanctions, a Gospel to be rejected on peril of eternal damnation.

These shallow philanthropists and religionists are as ignorant of the nature of man as they are of the revelation of God ; as little versed in the more imposing features of our constitution as in the high and solemn themes of Christianity. They have little to do with the deeper wants of our moral being. They do not understand how curious and almost contradictory a piece of workmanship is man. They seem never to have imagined that he has the closest relations to a moral law, to an atoning Saviour, to a righteous moral Governor, and to an impartial judgment seat. Equally ignorant are they of the bonds which hold society together. Much of the doctrine which is industriously promulgated at the present day tends to form a counterfeit philan-

thropy ; to make men sympathize with the misfortunes of the criminal, rather than with injured virtue, or with public morals ; to weaken the arm of the law, and reduce government itself into a compact remarkable for nothing but its weakness. *B. B. Edwards.*

We underrate the evil of sin. We gloss it over with smooth words. We enfold it in the contradictions of fatalistic philosophy. We transmute penalty into vengeance, and law into tyranny. In the ultimate issue the whole idea of retributive inflictions becomes abhorrent to our silken tastes. We jump to conclusions which dethrone God. This deterioration of moral sense needs to be reversed. We need to go back to the beginning and start anew, taking God's idea of retribution as our model. There is in every erect conscience an element of robustness which does not flinch at the spectacle of pain inflicted on wrong. For truthful convictions on this subject we need a cordial recognition of *the intrinsic excellence of the retributive sentiment in a right mind.* This is a vital point in our departure from the divine ideal in this thing. We repel from us the retributive idea because we mask it in unrighteousness. We make wrong right and right wrong ; evil good and good evil. That which in the divine government is *vindicative* of right, we degrade into the *vindictive*. What, in the last analysis, is sin ? It is pure malignity. It ripens into malign passion toward God. This is the germ and the efflorescence and fruitage of it. The retributive sentiment, in all untainted minds, is nothing else than an instinctive antagonism to malignity. It is hatred of that which hates God. Its assumption is, that it is right to punish that which hates God, and that, in the nature of things, such punishment is a necessity. Like all other right things, righteous punishment is intrinsically glorious. Pure justice is pure benevolence. Justice and love are twin stars of a binary constellation in which each revolves around the other. This was the sentiment which inspired the imprecatory Psalms. This it is that inspires gratulatory song in heaven in view of God's retributive dealing with guilt. To hate guilt or to hate God—this is the alternative. Sin, matured, brings these intense extremes into contrast and conflict, and the loyalty of holy minds, in heaven or on earth, does not waver in its choice. *A. Phelps.*

An Additional Ground of Defence. It will not be disputed that there are circumstances which not only warrant, but so absolutely and manifestly call for the feeling and expression of indignation, that, in failing then to exhibit such

feelings, a man so far comes short of being a good man. When we see men devoted to evil courses we may well wish and pray that they may be brought to higher views and sounder principles. But perverse, obstinate persistence, in spite of experience and clear knowledge, in practices grossly evil justly excites something besides—something different from the mere desire for the amelioration of the evil-doers. Sin involves misery, and that misery excites a good man's compassion; but sin is something more than misery, and the perception of that "something more" has its legitimate effect upon our minds. We pity a man even when his destitution arises from his own folly. But when he takes ignoble advantage of our pity, and underlying his apparent simplicity we see a cruel selfishness, a base, deliberate unrighteousness, our pity gives place to hot indignation. Nor is this indignation to be blamed. No doubt it becomes us to cherish benevolent feelings toward our fellow-men. But while benevolence is a high and beautiful principle, it is not the highest, much less the *only* principle that should regulate our conduct. And further, nowhere is he thought the best man who is least disposed to feel and express indignation at the sight of meanness and cruelty in man to man. And when the case of cruelty or meanness is flagrant, it is a mere necessity of an upright and generous nature to demand that punishment be inflicted on the evil-doers. Now, this being so, it needs but to believe as firmly in the existence of God as in the existence of man; to love God as sincerely as we love man, and to realize as truly the rights of God as the rights of man, to justify the feeling and the expression of indignation against wilful and persevering wickedness. This consideration avails so far as to convince us that whatever other objections may be brought against the imprecatory Psalms, the feelings which they express of indignation against determined sinners against God are neither misplaced nor unjustifiable. It carries us further and warrants this stronger position, that the man who has at heart the glory of God, and who entertains a genuine reverence for truth and holiness, *would not desire* that those who trample truth and holiness under foot should go unpunished. The general spirit of indignation against determined persisters in unrighteousness and against the enemies of the nation's welfare, is a spirit which our own consciences approve; and there are few, if any, of the imprecatory Psalms in which it is not manifest that this is the preponderating spirit. Dismissing, then, as groundless the charge that these Psalms, by

manifesting an inhuman spirit, violate the principles of ordinary morality, we proceed to *state the peculiar ground on which a complete defence can be built.*

The condition on which the Hebrews retained possession of their land was obedience to God and faithful adherence to His worship. National disaster was threatened as the consequence of departure from this obedience and worship. This threatening was pronounced in the law; and the facts of their history, as recorded in the Pentateuch and the books of Joshua and Judges, showed that the principle was acted on, the threatenings actually carried out. The facts of their history showed that political disaster *had* ensued upon religious declension; that, in consequence of their departure from the worship of God, the nation had often been subjected to grievous afflictions, and brought sometimes to the very verge of ruin. It must have been impressed upon the nation as almost a first principle that God's ordinary and settled method of vindicating His own cause was by inflicting temporal judgments upon those who opposed His truth. On the one hand, the sincere and zealous worshippers of God would not only regard this history as illustrative and corroborative of the threatenings of the law, but would regard these threatenings, thus illustrative and corroborative, as being still in force and reality of application in their own day. They would expect that in similar circumstances Divine interpositions would occur in their own time similar to those which had characterized the nation's earlier history. They must have expected this if they really believed, as they did, that the law was from Jehovah and that Jehovah was supreme. Consequently they would take the certain fulfilment of these threatenings as a source of encouragement to themselves, and as a ground of solemn warning to a wavering people. The open enemies of Jehovah-worship, on the other hand, in proportion to the length of time during which their avowed infidelity or idolatry failed to call forth any such Divine visitation, would all the more boldly challenge the authenticity of the law and the veracity, or, at least, the received meaning of the historical record, and would dispute the fact, therefore, of Jehovah's supremacy and covenant relationship to the people. "Observe," they would be ready to say—"observe how long we have neglected your law and are still prosperous; your law disproves itself, for the curses it threatens have not befallen us."

Thus, whether we consider these Divine interpositions as confidently relied on by the

worshippers of Jehovah, or questioned and disbelieved by irreligious men, the result is so far the same. To them would both parties appeal, believers and unbelievers alike. Both parties would willingly accept the issue; if Jehovah be the sole and supreme God and the covenant God of the Hebrews, then infidelity and idolatry must be followed by temporal judgments, and that the more certainly and terrible in proportion as the infidelity and idolatry are open and prevalent. The religious party would claim as testimony in their favor whatever judgments befell the land during the prevalence of irreligion. Their opponents would regard whatever prosperity they enjoyed as proof that strict Jehovah-worship was an unfounded delusion; that either Jehovah was nowise superior to other deities, or that, at least, He claimed no special relationship with, and exercised no special control over, the Hebrew nation. In other words, temporal prosperity becomes to the people the criterion, and the only criterion, of religious truth. And since the plain and reiterated teaching of the law was that true religion should be rewarded by temporal blessings, and opposition to it visited with temporal punishments, the people were warranted to try the law by its own test, judging it by its own criterion to decide that if Baal-worshippers prospered, then Jehovah-worship was on its own showing false. Since, therefore, temporal prosperity was with the people the criterion of religious truth; since the universally admitted maxim was that God's special covenant relationship to the Hebrews involved the infliction of temporal judgments on account of covenant unfaithfulness on the part of the people; and since the criterion and maxim were founded on God's own declared law and practice, the following result necessarily ensued: If the opponents of Jehovah-worship enjoyed freedom from any such manifestations of Divine displeasure; if temporal judgments did not follow their open disavowal of God, not only would they be themselves encouraged and confirmed in their opposition; not only would the faith of God's people be shaken and their souls be distressed, but the nation at large, whose religious affections were, at the best, but shallow and wavering, would be too likely to accept the omen and pass over to the enemy. Thus would the worship of Jehovah be overthrown, and idolatry or atheism triumphant.

What, then, was left for the Psalmist to do, when he saw idolatry prevalent and opposition to Jehovah active and abounding? There was but one way which God had as yet revealed as His method of vindicating and establishing His

own cause; there was but one test which was acknowledged as convincing by the people whom it was necessary to convince; what, then, was left to the Psalmist but to wish that that method might be adopted—that test employed? And what, therefore, are these imprecatory Psalms but earnest prayers that God would, for the sake of His own cause on the earth, apply that criterion which He Himself had established—that in that manner which He had declared as His own, He would prove His cause and worship to be true? And since God, not only as King of the universe, but as the covenant God and King of Israel, had clearly indicated temporal judgments as the special means which He had chosen to employ, the ignoring of these indications would have argued unbelief or want of loyalty. Besides, when these Psalms were not only prayers, but public prayers; when substantially the whole contest was as to whether Jehovah really did exercise authority and control; when special proofs or tests were inseparably bound up with the assertion of that control; when the enemy challenged these proofs; when the people were wavering, and some already going over to the enemy, because the proof was delayed; when the people would have listened to no other argument, would have been convinced by no more spiritual reasoning, simply because they had already so plain and practical a test and argument provided by the law itself; when these things were so, the prayers of the imprecatory Psalms were not only legitimate but unavoidable.

This, then, is our explanation. The law and the history taught the Hebrews to regard temporal judgments as the penalty of religious declension, and of open departure from God's service, and to regard temporal prosperity as the reward of obedience. The people, therefore, adopted this test, and would accept and be convinced by this test alone. In times of doubt and conflict this was the only recognized and effective way of proving the reality of Jehovah's supremacy and covenant relationship. Consequently, in the imprecatory Psalms the Psalmist is simply praying in the manner which irresistible circumstances determined for the triumph of truth—praying in the only way and for the only thing intelligible and convincing to the people, and authorized by that method of disciplining his people which God had adopted. And it is to be noticed that, while the history contains many instances of both general and singular judgments on account of sin—general, as in the times of bondage recorded in the Book of Judges; singular, as in the case of Nadab and

Abihu, Dathan and Abiram, Abimelech (Gideon's son), Eli, Solomon, etc.—there is no instance of intercession being made either for person or people *during their sin*—i.e., in case of disobedience or revolt against God the believer was not taught or required to pray for the conversion of the sinner, and, through that, for his salvation. He was required to take his stand promptly on the Lord's side, and to acquiesce in, and, if need be, execute His judgments against the ungodly. One of the duties required of them was solemnly to record this acquiescence. The Levites shall say, "Cursed be the man, and all the people shall say, Amen." Men must first be made to realize the majesty of righteousness in its opposition to sin before it is well, even for their own sakes, to show them righteousness glorified in grace to the sinner. The imprecatory Psalms, then, were but the responsive cadence that arose from those breasts which submitted to the discipline whereby God taught them to realize the truth which alone could fit them to receive, in its full beneficence, the larger truth that was to follow. It may be—for in this, as in other respects, the law was weak through the flesh—it may be that some in the ancient Church sang these Psalms without adequate apprehension of their true spirit and purpose; that, in the impatience of fear, or the extremity of sore suffering, they thought of little beyond a full retaliation upon their enemies. But these Psalms themselves bear a far nobler and grander impress. The earnest desire they breathe is that the truth, the righteousness, the *reality* of God may shine forth to man. And if this be incompatible with the impunity to the enemies of all truth and righteousness, then let that impunity cease, for the earth must not remain in bondage, nor God's name in dishonor, that wicked men may prosper.

We have shown that these Psalms, even taken by themselves, must be acquitted of the charge of cruelty and revenge, and of inconsistency with the spirit of the Gospel. At the same time we think it unfair to isolate them, as they are so generally isolated from the rest of the Psalter. They form one member which is in living relation to the whole, and the character of the whole should be taken into account before the character of this one part is determined. It is not that we would soften down one word uttered in them. They were meant to speak sternly. But no theory of these Psalms is a right one which does not recognize that, though the Psalmists did speak sternly when occasion compelled them, yet, when circumstances permitted it, they rejoiced to contemplate the glory of

God and extension of His kingdom in connection with the peace and happiness of all men.

In conclusion, if we are now asked whether, after all, the spirit of these Psalms is consistent with the spirit of the Gospel, we think it enough to answer, as we have now a right to answer, that the question as to these Psalms is involved in and really indetical with the question as to the reasonableness and righteousness of the whole discipline by which the people were trained under the Old Testament dispensation. If the Divine origin of that dispensation be denied, then it is useless to discuss the inspiration of these Psalms; the battle must be fought on another field; but if the Divine origin of that dispensation be admitted, the admission covers the case of the imprecatory Psalms. But, more particularly, the essential spirit of these Psalms is the earnest desire that God would defend and further His own cause in His own appointed way. It is our duty to cherish that desire still; and the more we do so, the more are our hearts in unison with these Psalms and with the Gospel. *Eng. Review.*

HEBREW POETRY.

The Book of Job, the Psalms, the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs we call POETICAL BOOKS, not because they are the only poetical books, but because the other books which also contain poetry come better under the designation of Prophetical Books, and because these five are usually distinguished as the Poetical Books, when separately regarded. *Kitto.*

The Hebrew language is full of life. Its entire structure is remarkably fitted for lyrical effect. The verb, adapted to express every variety of action and passion, contains the substance of the language. It is developed in some respects more fully than any Western dialect. The verb is wonderfully expressive. The number of adjectives and abstract nouns is extremely small. And these are mostly derived from verbs, or are themselves infinitives, and partake of the living nature of their root. In the English language the great number of particles is a serious impediment to the free movement of poetry. Prepositions and other connectives impart logical precision to a sentence, but it is at the expense of its fire and energy. The Hebrew particles are very few, and some of them exhibit a doubly compound relation, and thus greatly contribute to the vivacity of a sentence. B. B. E.

In the structure of the Old Testament the poetic element is a conspicuous feature. It lies

like grains of gold in the unwashed sand, or a rich vein of silver in the mine. It springs naturally out of the stem of national life like a fruitful bough of graceful and luxuriant growth. It is the fairest, loftiest, and most fragrant flower in the whole garden of the national literature, and is as inseparable from that literature, and as characteristic of it, as the rose is among flowers, or the diamond among gems. And if it is true that it is a far higher privilege to make a nation's songs than to frame its laws, that maxim has received striking illustration in the songs of Zion; for while the bulk of the nation's legal code has long ago fulfilled its purpose, which was essentially national and transient, the area of the moral and spiritual influence of its poetry is destined to expand indefinitely till it is commensurate with the family of man, and co-extensive with his speech and thought. *Leathes.*

Ancient Hebrew poetry was rather the poetry of thought and feeling than that of form. Of course, it had a style and diction of its own. But its chief characteristic consists in what has been called "parallelism" or "thought-rhythm" in the members which compose each verse, forming, like the double beat of the heart, a rise and fall in which the two thoughts which constitute the substance of the verse are expressed. The following example will illustrate this:

"Give to Jehovah, ye sons of the mighty,
Give unto Jehovah glory and praise."

Sometimes, however, the verse, and with it the rhythm or parallelism, consists not of two, but of three, four, and even more members. Subjoined is an instance of a threefold rhythm, which has been described as a "logical parallelism," on account of its progression of thought.

"Happy the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor standeth in the way of sinners,
Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers." A. E.

This is obviously the poetry of unsophisticated nature. There is no appearance of adjusting the flow of the verse to any recurring air. The Hebrew style is free from complication, and consists of the simple sentence with very little involution. It therefore naturally falls into this species of rhythmical verse. Hence Hebrew poetry is poetry still even in a translation. The sentence measurement is insensibly impressed upon it, and lingers in the fine rhythm and poetic beauty of our Authorized Version. The translators seem to have been constrained by the mere harmony of the thought

to express themselves in a simple and smoothly flowing stream of words. M.

The Hebrew poetry is remarkable for conciseness; the sentences are short; no superfluous words. It is highly figurative, and abounds with the noblest and most beautiful metaphors and comparisons, derived from a variety of sources; bold transitions; abrupt change of persons; and, in general, all the acknowledged ornaments of discourse. The Bible exhibits specimens of almost all kinds of poetry; agreeing in the same general features, but with differences suitable to the peculiar nature of each; didactic in the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and many of the Psalms; elegiac in Jeremiah's Lamentations, and several lesser pieces; pastoral in Solomon's Song; and lyric in hymns, as most of the Psalms, and several interspersed both in the historical and prophetic books; besides Job, the nature of which is disputed. *Gerard.*—Oriental poetry abounds with strong expressions, bold metaphors, glowing sentiments, and animated descriptions, portrayed in the most vivid colors. Hence the words of the Hebrew poets are neither to be understood in too lax a sense, nor to be interpreted too literally. In the comparisons introduced by them, the point of resemblance between the object of comparison and the thing with which it is compared should be examined, but not strained too far; and therefore the personifications, allegories, or other figures should be fully considered. Above all, it should be recollected that, as the sacred poets lived in the East, their ideas and manners were totally different from ours, and consequently are not to be considered according to our modes of thinking. *H. Horne.*

The poetry of the Old Testament is devotional in tone, and treats of the moral government of the world. It thus has to speak of the duty and the destiny of man as affected by the commands and promises, by the character and attributes, of the Almighty. This is at once the grandest and most interesting theme which can be presented for human contemplation. The unity and infinity, together with the holiness of God are topics which the Hebrew poets are never weary of enforcing. Hence their sustained loftiness of expression, their grandeur of conception, the unequalled majesty and force of their style. The truths which they have to present are of no doubtful import, are no matters of human speculation, but are absolute and eternal; they express the unchangeable purposes of the infinite One, of Him who created and governeth all things. The ideas of eternity and infinity, of absolute holiness, justice, and

truth are the most awful and impressive that can be placed before the human mind. They not only stimulate the imagination, but produce the emotions of sublimity and awe which no other theme can equally generate. It is on this account that Hebrew poetry stands alone in all literature. Except so far as admiration of it has induced in modern times attempts to imitate it, and has thus created such poems as Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and Byron's *Cain*, there is not only nothing second to it, but nothing like it in the whole recorded range of human thought. *F. Bowen.*

—In no Greek writer, in none anterior to the diffusion of the Gospel, are there to be found any rudiments whatever—any mere fragments, however small—of that *LIFE OF THE SOUL TOWARD GOD*, and of that *DIVINE CORRESPONDENCE WITH MAN*, which, in every Psalm, in every page of the Prophets, shines, burns, rules with force—overrides poetry—drives from its area the feeble resources of human art, and brings down upon earth those powers and those profound emotions which bespeak the nearness of the Infinite and the Eternal, when God holds communion with those that seek to live in the light of His favor. I. T.

The Hebrew poets never represent the Deity as an impassive principle; a mere organizing intellect removed at infinite distance from human hopes and fears. He is for them a Being of like passions with themselves, requiring heart for heart, and capable of inspiring affection, because capable of feeling and returning it. Awful, indeed, are the thunders of His utterance, and the clouds that surround His dwelling-place; very terrible is the vengeance He executes on the nations that forget Him; but to His chosen people, and especially to the men “after His own heart,” whom He anoints from the midst of them, His “still, small voice” speaks in sympathy and loving kindness. Every Hebrew, while his breast glowed with patriotic enthusiasm at those promises, which he shared as one of the favored race, had a yet deeper source of emotion, from which gushed perpetually the aspirations of prayer and thanksgiving. He might consider himself alone in the presence of his God; the single being to whom a great revelation had been made, and over whose head “an exceeding weight of glory” was suspended. His personal welfare was infinitely concerned with every event that had taken place in the miraculous order of Providence. For him the rocks of Horeb had trembled, and the waters of the Red Sea were parted in their course. The word given on

Sinai with such solemn pomp of ministration was given to his own individual soul, and brought him into immediate communion with his Creator. That awful being could never be put away from him. He was about his path, and about his feet, and knew all his thoughts long before. Yet this tremendous, enclosing presence, was a presence of love. It was a manifold, everlasting manifestation of one deep feeling—a desire for human affection. Such a belief, while it enlisted even pride and self-interest on the side of piety, had a direct tendency to excite the best passions of our nature. Love is not long asked in vain from generous dispositions. A Being never absent, but standing beside the life of each man with ever-watchful tenderness, and recognized, though invisible, in every blessing that befell them from youth to age, became naturally the object of their warmest affections. Their belief in Him could not exist without producing, as a necessary effect, that profound impression of passionate individual attachment which in the Hebrew authors always mingles with and vivifies their faith in the Invisible. All the books in the Old Testament are breathed upon by this breath of life. Especially it is to be found in the Psalms, which remain, after some thousand years, the most perfect form in which the religious sentiment of man has been embodied.

“But what is true of Judaism is yet more true of Christianity, *matre pulchrâ filia pulchrior.*” In addition to all the characters of Hebrew monotheism there exists in the doctrine of the Cross a peculiar and inexhaustible treasure for the affectionate feelings. The idea of the God-Man, the God whose goings forth have been from everlasting, yet visible to men for their redemption as an earthly temporal creature, living, acting, and suffering among themselves, then (which is yet more important) transferring to the unseen place of His spiritual agency the same humanity He wore on earth, so that the lapse of generations can in no way affect the conception of His identity; this is the most powerful thought that ever addressed itself to a human imagination. Here was solved at once the great problem which so long had distressed the teachers of mankind, how to make virtue the object of passion, and to secure at once the warmest enthusiasm in the heart, with the clearest perception of right and wrong in the understanding. The character of the blessed Founder of our faith became an abstract of morality to determine the judgment, while at the same time it remained personal and liable to love. The written Word and established

Church prevented a degeneration into ungoverned mysticism, but the predominant principle of vital religion always remained that of self-sacrifice to the Saviour. Not only the higher divisions of moral duties, but the simple, primary impulses of benevolence, were subordinated to this new absorbing passion. The world was loved "in Christ alone." The brethren were members of His mystical body. All the other bonds that had fastened down the Spirit of the Universe to our narrow round of earth were as nothing in comparison to this golden chain of suffering and self-sacrifice, which at once riveted the heart of man to One who, like himself, was acquainted with grief. Pain is the deepest thing we have in our nature, and union through pain has always seemed more holy and more real than any other. *Arthur Hallam.*

EXPOSITION OF THE PSALMS.

Our Lord's interpretation of the Psalms is at once the starting-point and the goal of Christian interpretation of them. The interpretation of them by the Church begins with that of the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, upon which day the Spirit, whose organ David in his last words (2 Sam. 23 : 2) confesses himself to have been, descended upon the Apostles as the Spirit of Jesus, the fulfiller and the fulfilment of prophecy. This Spirit of the Glorified One completed what He, in the days of His humiliation and after His resurrection, had begun ; it opened up to the disciples the meaning of the Psalms. With what predilection they turned to these, we may gather from the fact that they are cited some seventy times in the New Testament—next to Isaiah, the most frequently of all the books of the Old Testament. From these disclosures regarding the Psalms the Church will have to draw even to the end of time. For only the end will be equal to the beginning and even surpass it. We must not, however, seek in the New Testament what it does not profess to offer, an answer to the questions of lower science, of grammar, contemporary history, and criticism. The highest and final questions relating to the spiritual meaning of Scripture find here an answer. The *post-Apostolic patristic* interpretation was incapable of performing this task. With the exception of Origen and Jerome, the expositors of the early Church possessed no knowledge of Hebrew ; and even these two did not possess enough to enable them to emancipate themselves entirely from the dependence upon the LXX. that only too frequently led them astray. The exposition of

the Church of the *Middle Ages* produced nothing that has advanced in anything essential beyond that of the Fathers. At the threshold of the Reformation the exposition of the Psalms had become a slavish compilation of the comments of others and a heaping up of scholastic rubbish. When in consequence of the Reformation there dawned upon the Church the new light of a grammatical and spiritually deep comprehension of the Scriptures, the rose-garden of the Psalter began to diffuse its odors as in the renewed freshness of a May morning, and German hymns, born again out of the Psalter, resounded from the shores of the Baltic to the foot of the Alps with all the fervor of a renewed first love. Rendered into imperishable hymns (by Luther, Albinus, Franck, Gerhard, Jonas, Musculus, Poliander, Ringwaldt, and many others), the old Psalms passed once more into the congregational singing of the German as well as of the Scandinavian Lutheran Church ; in the French Church Clément Marot turned first thirty and then other nineteen Psalms into hymns (1541-43), and Theodore Beza afterward added the rest (1562). As early as 1542 Calvin introduced the Psalms in Marot's translation into the public worship of the Geneva Church, even translating a few of them himself (*e.g.*, 25, 46). The Psalter remained the exclusive hymn-book of the Reformed Church down to the eighteenth century. In respect of experimental, mystical, and yet healthy knowledge of the meaning of Scripture, Luther is incomparable ; his expositions of the Psalms, especially of the penitential Psalms and of Psalm 90, are superior to all previous works on the subject, and will always remain a mine of wealth for future laborers. As an exegete, Calvin takes the place of equal honor alongside of the German reformer. His commentary on the Psalms (first published at Geneva in 1557, folio) combines with psychological penetration a clearer discernment of the nature of the type and greater freedom in its way of looking at history. D.

For the first true exposition of Scripture, of the Old Testament more especially, we must come to the time of the Reformation. Here Luther and Calvin hold the foremost place, each having his peculiar excellence. Luther, in his own grand, fearless way, always goes straight to the heart of the matter. He is always on the lookout for some great principle, some food for the spiritual life, some truth which can be turned to practical account. He is pre-eminently what in modern phrase would be called *subjective* as a commentator. Every

word of Scripture seems to him instinct with life and meaning for himself and his own immediate circumstances. But on that very account he not unfrequently misses the proper and original force of a passage, because he is so intent on a personal application ; not to mention that he cannot always shake himself free of the allegorical cobwebs of patristic interpretation. Calvin, on the other hand, may justly be styled the great master of exegesis. He is always careful to ascertain as exactly as possible the *whole* meaning and scope of the writer on whom he comments. In this respect his critical sagacity is marvellous, and quite unrivalled. He keeps close, moreover, to the sure ground of historical interpretation, and, even in the Messianic Psalms, always sees a first reference to the actual circumstances of the writer. Of the general soundness of his principles of exegesis, where he is not under the influence of doctrinal prejudices—as, indeed, he rarely is in his Commentary on the Psalms—I am thoroughly convinced. He is the prince of commentators. He stands foremost among those who, with that true courage which fears God rather than man, have dared to leave the narrow grooves and worn ruts of a conventional theology and to seek truth only for itself. It is well to study the writings of this great man, if only that we may learn how possible it is to combine soundness in the faith with a method of interpretation varying even in important particulars from that commonly received. Nothing, I believe, is so likely to beget in us a spirit of enlightened liberality, of Christian forbearance, of large-hearted moderation, as the careful study of the history of doctrine and the history of interpretation. We shall then learn how widely good men have differed in all ages, how much of what we are apt to think essential truth is not essential, and, without holding loosely what we ourselves believe to be true, we shall not be hasty to condemn those who differ from us. P.

[In this connection it may subserve a helpful purpose to cite a paragraph from Bishop Perowne's preface to his master-work upon the Psalms. B.]

Truth has been my one object, I can truly say ; mindful, I hope, that truth can only be attained through "the heavenly illumination of the Holy Ghost." Yet I would not forget what Luther has so beautifully said, that none can hope to understand for himself or teach to others the full meaning of every part of the Psalms. It is enough for us if we understand it in part. "Many things doth the Spirit re-

serve to Himself that He may ever keep us as His scholars, many things He doth but show to allure us, many more He teacheth to affect us ; and, as Augustine hath admirably said, no one has ever so spoken as to be understood by every one in every particular, much more doth the Holy Ghost Himself alone possess the full understanding of all His own words. Wherefore I must honestly confess that I know not whether I possess the full and proper understanding of the Psalms or not, though I doubt not that that which I give is in itself true. For all that Augustine, Jerome, Athanasius, Hilary, Cassiodorus, and others have written on the Psalter is very true, though sometimes as far as possible from the literal meaning. One fails in one thing, another in another ; others will see what I do not. What then follows, but that we should help one another, and make allowance for those who err, as knowing that we either have erred, or shall err, ourselves. I know that he must be a man of most boundless hardihood who would venture to give it out that he understands a single book of Scripture in all its parts ; nay, who would venture to assume that one Psalm has ever been perfectly understood by any one. Our life is a beginning and a setting out, not a finishing ; he is best who shall have approached nearest to the mind of the Spirit." P.

ENGLISH VERSIONS OF THE PSALMS.

The first metrical version of the Psalms in English was made in 1538, by Miles Coverdale, who with Tyndale has the high honor of being the first to give the printed Bible to the English people in their own tongue. The prose version of the Psalms, now read in the English prayer-book, is his also. And in Scotland, three brothers named Wedderburn, in Dundee, published versions known as the Dundee Psalms, even before Knox's time.

The first complete version of the Psalms in English was that known as "Sternhold and Hopkins." Thomas Sternhold was groom of the robes to Henry VIII. and Edward VI.; and John Hopkins was a minister in Suffolk. Additions by other hands were made to those they translated. It was issued in portions, first in London ; then in Geneva by refugees driven into exile by Bloody Mary ; and finally it was completed in 1563, and adapted under Elizabeth as the metrical version to be used in the Church of England. Its popularity may be inferred from the fact that three hundred and nine editions of it were issued by 1698, when it was superseded in the Established Church by the

version of Tate and Brady. But the Non-conformists used it till the version of Watts was published. In the year following its completion, the General Assembly of Scotland adopted the Sternhold and Hopkins version, with certain omissions which were filled with others made by Scotch authors.

Francis Rouse, a native of Cornwall, in England, and at his death provost of Eton College, made in 1646 the version of the Psalms which is best known. He was a member of Parliament in the reign of Charles I., and of Cromwell's privy council. The Westminster Assembly, of which he was a member, gave it their approval. With some changes it was adopted also by the Scotch General Assembly, and it has been displaced for a more melodious version only in this generation.

Nahum Tate, poet laureate under William III. and Queen Anne, with the assistance of Rev. Dr. Nicholas Brady, published 'by royal authority a new version of the Psalms which has been the standard of the Established Church in England and of the Protestant Episcopal Church in this country, till within very recent years.

Isaac Watts was a pioneer in a new field when he published, in 1719, his "Imitation of the Psalms of David in the Language of the New Testament." Hitherto versions were commended in proportion as they were literal. Watts boldly abandoned the custom of adhering closely to the text, and adopted the privilege of paraphrasing and introducing into them the Christian ideas of the New Testament. His "Hymns" appeared twelve years earlier. Both were received with immediate favor and had no unimportant share in the great awakening of that century. When Watts died, an old man, his mantle fell upon the Wesleys. Charles Wesley composed one hundred and nine Psalms, in the method of imitation begun by Watts, besides a great flood of hymns. From this time began that indiscriminate use of Psalms and hymns by English speaking people, which had been the custom in Germany for two centuries. So slowly did nations interact upon one another, even Christian and Protestant nations, till this century. *J. H. Thomas.*

The Revised Version. The revision of the Psalter was attended with peculiar difficulty. For generations it has been endeared to multitudes as the vehicle of their devotional feelings. This has rendered its words and phrases inexpressibly dear; and the least alteration seems like the touch of a desecrating hand. It is fortunate that alteration is not nearly so much

called for here as in some other books, particularly in Job. The early English translators generally seized the sense of the original, and expressed it with force and beauty, yet there are cases in which faithfulness requires a new rendering. It is believed that in the main the revisers have been wisely conservative. T. W. C. —The revised Psalter is certainly a great improvement on that of two hundred and seventy-four years ago. One who reads the two side by side will be surprised to discover how many really important changes have been made. One who reads the Revision by itself, while noticing, possibly, no great difference in sound or sense, will still wonder at the ease with which he comprehends some hitherto beclouded texts, and, here and there, will be at once startled and charmed by the new light that bursts upon him from quite unexpected places. E. C. B.

ESTIMATES AND TESTIMONIES OF DEVOUT AND LEARNED MEN.

[*The sweetness and helpfulness of these citations will serve as excuse for any apparent repetitions in the thought.* B.]

What the heart is in man, that the Psalter is in the Bible. *Joh. Arnd* —If the Scriptures be compared to a body, the Psalms may well be the heart, they are so full of sweet affections and passions. For in other portions of Scripture God speaks to us; but in the Psalms holy men speak to God and to their own hearts. *Sibbes.* —In the Psalms the soul turns inward on itself, and their great feature is that they are the expression of a large spiritual experience. They come straight from "the heart within the heart," and the secret depths of the spirit. Where, in those rough cruel days, did they come from, those piercing, lightning-like gleams of strange spiritual truth, those magnificent outlooks over the kingdom of God, those raptures at His presence and His glory, those wonderful disclosures of self-knowledge, those pure outpourings of the love of God? Surely they tell of higher guiding, prepared for all time; surely, as we believe, they repeat the whispers of the Spirit of God, they reflect the very light of the Eternal Wisdom. *Dean Church.*

No one can read the Psalms with a devout sympathetic spirit without being thoroughly impressed with their immortal beauty. They are as modern as they are ancient. They fit themselves as perfectly, as spontaneously to the needs and the aspirations of Christian souls to-day in the midst of every change of centuries

and of civilization as they did to those of the devout and reverent Hebrew soul in the days when first they were written. R. S. S.—Lyrical art has never produced anything comparable to the Psalms. Purifying every joy, sanctifying every grief, reaching higher than ourselves when at our greatest height, deeper than ourselves when we feel plunged into the depths of the abyss, they alone fit all human conditions, and seem always to have been composed precisely with a view to the circumstances in which we find ourselves placed. Hence their everlasting freshness. Other collections of poetry pass away and give place to new ones ; the Psalms live on forever. *Godet.*

No single book of Scripture, not even of the New Testament, has, perhaps, ever taken such hold on the *heart* of Christendom. None, if we may dare judge, unless it be the Gospels, has had so large an influence in moulding the affections, sustaining the hopes, purifying the faith of believers. With its words, rather than with their own, they have come before God. In these they have uttered their desires, their fears, their confessions, their aspirations, their sorrows, their joys, their thanksgivings. By these their devotion has been kindled and their hearts comforted. The Psalter has been, in the truest sense, the Prayer-Book both of Jews and Christians. The nature of the volume accounts for this ; for it is in itself, to a very great extent, the converse of the soul with God. Hence it does not teach us so much what we are to do or what we are to be, as how we are to pray ; or, rather, it teaches us what we are to do and to be through prayer. “This,” says Luther, “is the great excellence of the Psalter ; that other books, indeed, make a great noise about the *works* of the saints, but say very little about their *words*. But herein is the pre-eminence of the Psalter, and hence the sweet fragrance which it sheds, that it not only tells of the works of the saints, but also of the words with which they spake to God and prayed, and still speak and pray.” P.

The Psalms are interwoven with the texture of the New Testament. Christianity is responsible for the Psalter with its very life. The golden key of the Psalter lies in a pierced hand. There are many who profess to expel Christ from the Psalms in the interest of the Psalms themselves. But the Psalter as a living thing, and the association with it of our Incarnate Lord, stand together. Those were memorable words which Mr. Coleridge wrote upon the margin of his Prayer-Book : “As a transparency on some night of public rejoicing, seen by com-

mon day, with the lamps from within removed, even such would the Psalms be to me, uninterpreted by the Gospel.” *Bishop Alexander.*

As long as the career of mortal man is what it is in life, checkered by trial, danger, and bereavement ; as long as the human heart is what it is, full of want and sin, and ever liable to sorrow, so long will the Psalms of David find their echo there, and not fail of earnest and anxious readers. They are the voice of man as man, and they are the truest expression of what must ever be permanent and unchanging, man’s relation to God. *Leathes.*—They pass through every mode of the lyre, and strike every chord of the human heart. There is hardly any devout sentiment or tender affection of which man’s nature is capable to which they do not give utterance. There is no lofty topic of contemplation in the outward universe, or in the relations of God with man, which they do not set forth and elevate with new grandeur and impressiveness. Some of them, such as the 19th, the 90th, the 104th, and the 139th are so majestic and sublime that they can hardly be read from beginning to end without awe and tears. *F. Bowen.*

During a large portion of a period of a thousand years, from Moses to Nehemiah, the Psalms shine like “a light in a dark place.” They tell us how, amid corruption, idolatry, and apostasy, God was truly loved and faithfully worshipped. Not only as “given by inspiration of God” are they a witness to the fact that God was teaching His people. So far they are what the prophetic books are. Psalmists, as well as prophets, were chosen by Him to be the interpreters of His will, to declare His truth. Both the one and the other are the organs and vehicles of the divine communications. But there is this further significance in the Psalms. They are not only—not chiefly, it may be said—the voice of God to man ; they are the voice of man to God. They are prayers, indeed, far beyond merely human utterances ; they are prayers which the Spirit of God Himself has given as the model of all prayer and intercession ; but they bear witness, at the same time, to the reality of the soul’s spiritual life in those who uttered them. Truly divine, they are also truly human. They go infinitely beyond us ; they have a depth and height and length and breadth of meaning to which the best of us can never fully attain. We feel that they rise into regions of peaceful and holy communion with God to which we may aspire, but which we have not reached. But meanwhile they have a reality which satisfies us that they

are the true expression of human hearts pouring themselves out toward God, though often themselves carried beyond themselves through the power of the Holy Ghost. P.

These treasures of sacred song are, beyond measure, rich and precious. They witness to the deep Christian emotion of good men who lived three thousand years ago. Here are their experiences, their trials, their straits, their conflicts against temptation; and here, also, are the records of their precious faith in God, through which they gained the victory over the world and the wickedness thereof. Here stand recorded their exultant songs of triumph in the day of their deliverance; here the outflowings of their grateful hearts in praise to the power that redeemed, and to the loving kindness that remembered them with plenteousness of mercy and salvation. These forms of uttering devout affection are so rich, so full, and so various that Christians in all ages have delighted to find here the very words prepared to their hand in which their souls, burdened or lightened, might speak before the Lord of their wants, or of the fulness of their joy when those wants were supplied. H. C.—The very excellence of the Psalms is their universality. They spring from the deep fountains of the human heart; and God, in His providence and by His Spirit, has so ordered it that they should be for His church an everlasting heritage. Hence they express the sorrows, the joys, the aspirations, the struggles, the victories not of one man, but of all. And if we ask, How comes this to pass? the answer is not far to seek: One object is ever before the eyes and the heart of the Psalmists. All enemies, all distresses, all persecutions, all sins are seen in the light of God. It is to Him that the cry goes up; it is to Him that the heart is laid bare; it is to Him that the thanksgiving is uttered. This it is which makes them so true, so precious, so universal. No surer proof of their inspiration can be given than this, that they are “not of an age, but for all time,” that the ripest Christian can use them in the fulness of his Christian manhood, though the words are the words of one who lived centuries before the coming of Christ in the flesh. P.

The Psalms show the individual soul in its God-ward attitude, wrestling with the thought of the Divine, standing naked in the light of His presence. They open to our view the Holy of Holies of the human consciousness, when the *self* meets and talks with its God, and trembling, yearning, despairing, exulting, faces the bared realities of its own and its Creator's bosom.

Nowhere else has the heart spoken as in these Psalms. Nowhere else has it found expression so intelligible, so deep, so sad and joyous, so varied and tuneful and thrilling, so true and adequate, as in these sacred songs. The Psalms are beloved because they speak to and for the heart, because they give it the outlet that it needs. When exultant or cast down, when yearning, burdened, passion-swept, it seeks an utterance and finds no words, it has recourse to the Psalmist of Israel, whose sweet harp notes soothe it as they did the mad spirit of Saul, give form to its feelings, faith and desires, and waft them up to the waiting ear of God. An.

Psalmody supplies that greatest of blessings, love. A Psalm puts demons to flight, procures the aid of angels, is armor in nightly fears, refreshment in daily toils; it teaches rudiments to the beginner in things spiritual, it helps the proficient to further advances, it establishes the perfected, it is the voice of the Church. It is this which gives brightness to our festivals, it is this which forms in us godly sorrow; for a Psalm calls forth a tear even from a stony heart. O what a wise plan of our Teacher, who so manages that we shall at the same time be singing and learning useful lessons; whereby His instructions are the more deeply impressed upon our souls. For what is there that we cannot learn from the Psalms? Can we not learn majestic courage, strict justice, dignified self-control, consummate wisdom, the method of repentance, the measures of patience, every good thing that one can name? Here we find a perfect theology, a prediction of Christ's sojourn in the flesh, a warning of judgment, a hope of resurrection, a fear of punishment, promises of glory, revelations of mysteries; all are treasured up, as in some great and general storehouse, in the Book of Psalms. Basil.

The choice and flower of all things profitable in other books the Psalms doth more briefly contain, and more movingly express by reason of their poetic form. The ancients show how, above the rest, the Psalter doth set forth and celebrate all the considerations and operations which belong to God; it magnifieth the holy meditations and actions of divine men; it is of things heavenly a universal declaration, working in them whose hearts God inspireth with the due consideration thereof, a habit or disposition of mind whereby they are made fit vessels both for receipt and delivery of every spiritual perfection. What is there necessary for man to know which the Psalms are not able to teach? They are to beginners an easy and familiar introduction; a mighty augmentation

of all virtue and knowledge in such as are entered before ; a strong confirmation to the most perfect among others. Heroical magnanimity, exquisite justice, grave moderation, exact wisdom, repentance unfeigned, unwearied patience, the mysteries of God, the sufferings of Christ, the terrors of wrath, the comforts of grace, the works of providence over this world, and the promised joys of the world which is to come ; all good to be necessarily either known, or done, or had, this one celestial fountain yieldeth. There is not any grief or disease incident unto the soul of man, any wound or sickness for which there is not in this treasure-house a present comfortable remedy at all times ready to be found. Hereof it is that we covet to make the Psalms especially familiar unto all. *Hooker.*

Where do we find a sweeter voice of joy than in the Psalms of thanksgiving and praise ? There you look into the heart of all the godly, as into a beautiful garden, as into heaven itself. What delicate, sweet, and lovely flowers are there springing up of all manner of beautiful, joyous thoughts toward God and His goodness ! On the other hand, where do you find more profound, mournful, pathetic expressions of sorrow than the plaintive Psalms contain ? The Psalter forms a little book for all saints, in which every man, in whatever situation he may be placed, shall find Psalms and sentiments which shall apply to his own case, and be the same to him as if they were for his own sake alone ; so expressed as he could not express them himself, nor find nor even wish them better than they are. In the other books we are taught both by word and by example what we ought to do ; this not only teaches, but imparts both the method and the practice with which to fulfil the word, and to copy the example. For we have no power of our own to fulfil the law of God, or to copy Christ ; but only to pray and to desire that we may do the one and copy the other, and then, when we have obtained our request, to praise and give thanks. But what else is the Psalter, but prayer to God and praise of God ; that is, a book of hymns ? Therefore the most blessed Spirit of God, the Father of orphans, and the Teacher of infants, seeing that we know not what or how we ought to pray, as the apostle saith, and desiring to help our infirmities, after the manner of schoolmasters who compose for children letters or short prayers, that they may send them to their parents, so prepares for us in this book both the words and feelings with which we should address our Heavenly Father, and pray con-

cerning those things which in the other books He had taught us we ought to do and to copy, that so a man may not feel the want of anything which is of import to his eternal salvation. So great is the loving care and grace of our God toward us, who is blessed forevermore. *Luther.*

This book I am wont to style an anatomy of all parts of the soul ; for no one will discover in himself a single feeling whereof the image is not reflected in this mirror. Nay, all griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, and anxieties—in short, all those tumultuous agitations wherewith the minds of men are wont to be tossed—the Holy Ghost hath here represented to the life. The rest of Scripture contains the commands which God gave to His servants to be delivered unto us. But here the prophets themselves, holding converse with God, inasmuch as they lay bare all their inmost feelings, invite or impel every one of us to self-examination, that of all the infirmities to which we are liable, and all the sins of which we are so full, none may remain hidden. Moreover, whatever would serve to encourage us in our prayer to God is shown us in this book. Nor only promises meet us here ; but we have often set before us one who, with the invitation of God calling one way and the hindrances of the flesh another, girds himself bravely to prayer ; so that if at any time we be harassed by doubts of one kind or another, we may learn to wrestle against them till our soul takes wings and mounts up with glad freedom unto God. Nor that only, but that through hesitations, fears, alarms, we may still strive to pray till we rejoice for the consolation. And we have secured to us in this book what is of all things most desirable, not only a familiar access unto God, but the right and the liberty to make known to Him those infirmities which shame does not suffer us to confess to our fellow-men. Further, the sacrifice of praise, which God declares to be a sacrifice of sweetest savor and most precious to Him, we are here accurately instructed how to offer with acceptance. Rich, moreover, as the book is in all those precepts which tend to form a holy, godly, and righteous life, yet chiefly will it teach us how to bear the cross, which is the true test of our obedience, when, giving up all our own desires, we submit ourselves to God, and so suffer our lives to be ordered by His will that even our bitterest distresses grow sweet because they come from His hand. Finally, not only in general terms are the praises of God's goodness uttered, teaching us so to rest in Him alone, that pious spirits

may look for His sure succor in every time of need, but the free forgiveness of sins, which alone reconciles God to us and secures to us true peace with Him, is so commended that nothing is wanting to the knowledge of eternal salvation. *Calvin.*

From whatever point of view any church hath contemplated the scheme of its doctrine, by whatever name they have thought good to designate themselves, and however opposed to each other in church government or observance of rites, you will find them all, by harmonious and universal consent, adopting the Psalter as the outward form by which they shall express the inward feelings of the Christian life. Thus the universal Church of Christ hath given its witness that these Psalms are made not for one age, but for all ages ; nor for one place, but for all places ; not for one soul, but for all souls. . . . The songs of Zion are comprehensive as the human soul and varied as human life ; where no possible state of natural feeling shall not find itself tenderly expressed and divinely treated with appropriate remedies ; where no condition of human life shall not find its rebuke or consolation ; because they treat not life after the fashion of an age or people, but life in its rudiments, the life of the soul, with the joys and sorrows to which it is amenable, from concurrence with the outward necessity of the fallen world. For pure pathos and tenderness of heart, for sublime imagination, for touching pictures of natural scenery, and genial sympathy with nature's various moods ; for patriotism, whether in national weal or national woe ; for beautiful imagery, whether derived from the relationship of human life or the forms of the created universe ; and for the illustration, by their help, of spiritual conditions ; moreover, for those rapid transitions in which the lyrical muse delighteth—her lithesome graces at one time, her deep and full inspiration at another, her exuberance of joy and her lowest falls of grief, and for every other form of the natural soul which is wont to be shadowed forth by this kind of composition—we challenge anything to be produced from the literature of all ages and countries, worthy to be compared with what we find even in the English version of the Book of Psalms. *Irving.*

How great is the history of the Psalms ! David sang them, and Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and all the prophets. With Psalms Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah celebrated their victories. Psalms made glad the heart of the exiles who returned

from Babylon. Psalms gave courage and strength to the Maccabees in their brave struggles to achieve their country's independence, and were the repeated expression of their thanksgivings. The Lord of Psalmists and the Son of David by the words of a Psalm proved Himself to be higher than David ; and sang Psalms with His apostles on the night before He suffered, when He instituted the Holy Supper of His love. In His last awful hour on the cross He expressed in the words of one Psalm " His fear and His need of God," and in the words of another gave up His spirit to His Father. With Psalms Paul and Silas praised God in the prison at midnight, when their feet were made fast in the stocks, and sang so loud that the prisoners heard them. And, after his own example, the apostle exhorts the Christians at Ephesus and Colossæ to teach and admonish one another with Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Jerome tells us that in his day the Psalms were to be heard in the fields and the vineyards of Palestine, and that they fell sweetly on the ear, mingling with the songs of birds and the scent of flowers in the spring. The ploughman as he guided his plough chanted the Hallelujah, and the reaper, the vine-dresser, and the shepherd sang the songs of David. " These," he says, " are our love-songs, these the instruments of our agriculture." Sidonius Apollinaris makes his boatmen, as they urge their heavily laden barge up stream, sing Psalms, till the river-banks echo again with the Hallelujah, and beautifully applies the custom, in a figure, to the voyage of the Christian life, With the verse of a Psalm, " Turn again, then, unto thy rest, O my soul," the pious Babylas, Bishop of Antioch, comforted himself, while awaiting his martyrdom in the Decian persecution, saying, " From this we learn that our soul comes to rest when it is removed by death from this restless world." Paulla, the friend of Jerome, was seen by those who were gathered around her in her last hour to move her lips, and when they stooped to listen they heard the words, " How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts." A Psalm was the best utterance for the overflowing joy of Augustine's heart at his conversion, and a Psalm was his consolation when he lay upon his death bed. With the words of Psalms, Chrysostom comforted himself in his exile, writing thus, " When driven from the city, I cared nothing for it. But I said to myself, If the empress wishes to banish me, let her banish me ; ' the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.' " And again : " David clothes me with armor,

saying, 'I will speak of thy testimonies before kings, and will not be ashamed.' " With the words of a Psalm holy Bernard expired. With the words of a Psalm, Huss and Jerome of Prague gave up their souls to God, without fear, in the midst of the fire. Chanting the twelfth verse of the hundred and eighteenth Psalm, with voices that rose high above the din of battle, the Protestant army rushed to victory at Courtras. With the voice of a Psalm, Luther entered Worms, singing brave defiance to pope and cardinals, and all the gates of hell. With Psalms that faithful servant of God, Adolphe Monod, strengthened himself to endure the agonies of a lingering and painful disease. And what shall I say more? The history of the Psalms is the history of the Church, and the history of every heart in which has burned the love of God. It is a history not fully revealed in this world, but one which is written in heaven. It is a history which, could

we know it, might teach us to hush many an angry thought, to recall many a bitter, hasty, uncharitable speech. The pages of that book have often been blotted with the tears of those whom others deem hard and cold, and whom they treated with suspicion or contempt. Those words have gone up to God, mingled with the sighs or scarcely uttered in the heart-broken anguish of those whom pharisees called sinners, of those whom Christians denounced as heretics or infidels, but who loved truth and God above all things else. Surely it is holy ground. We cannot pray the Psalms without realizing in a very special manner the communion of saints, the oneness of the Church militant and the Church triumphant. We cannot pray the Psalms without having our hearts opened, our affections enlarged, our thoughts drawn heavenward. He who can pray them best is nearest to God, knows most of the Spirit of Christ, is ripest for heaven. *Bishop Perowne.*

FIRST BOOK OF THE PSALTER.

PSALMS I.-XLI.

PSALM I.

1 BLESSED is the man that walketh not in the
counsel of the wicked,
Nor standeth in the way of sinners,
Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.
2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD ;
And in his law doth he meditate day and
night.
3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the
streams of water,
That bringeth forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also doth not wither ;

And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

4 The wicked are not so ;
But are like the chaff which the wind driveth
away.
5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the
judgment,
Nor sinners in the congregation of the right-
eous.
6 For the LORD knoweth the way of the
righteous :
But the way of the wicked shall perish.

THE book opens with an exquisite picture of the truly Happy Man, as seen from the highest ground of the old dispensation. He is described both literally and figuratively, positively and negatively, directly and by contrast, with respect both to his character and his condition, here and hereafter. The compression of all this into so short a composition, without confusion or obscurity, and with a high degree of graphic vividness, shows what the Psalm is in a rhetorical or literary point of view, apart from its religious import and Divine authority. It contains a summary of the doctrine taught in this book and in the Scriptures generally, as to the connection between happiness and goodness. It is well placed, therefore, as an introduction to the whole collection. A.

This Psalm seems to have been placed first in the collection because, from its general character and subject, it formed a suitable introduction to the rest. It treats of the blessedness of the righteous, and the misery of the wicked, topics which constantly recur in the Psalms, but it treats of them as if all experience pointed only in one direction. The poet rests calmly in the truth that it is well with the righteous. He is not vexed with those passionate questionings of heart which meet us in such Psalms as the

thirty-seventh and seventy-third. The close of the Psalm is, as Ewald remarks, truly prophetic, perpetually in force, and consequently descriptive of what is to be expected at all times in the course of the world's history. In style the Psalm is simple and clear. In form it is little more than the expansion of a proverb. P.

Obviously this Psalm was either written for an introduction to the Psalter or was selected by the compiler as one adapted to this place. It breathes forth and foreshadows the spirit of the entire book in this special respect, celebrating the blessedness and prosperity of the truly good man in this world and inferring his corresponding fruition in the world to come. He is put in contrast with the wicked both in his life and in his destiny. C.—This Psalm carries blessedness in the frontispiece ; it begins where we all hope to end ; it may well be called a Christian's guide, for it discovers the quicksands where the wicked sink down in perdition, and the firm ground on which the saints tread to glory. *Thomas Watson.*

The Book of Psalms may be said to be built upon the foundation of its first word. There is not a "woe" in the whole book. God is loath to speak of judgments, but there are very

many instances of the occurrence of this phrase "blessed." It appears some five-and-twenty times. We used to call the book "The Psalms of David." We have learned that it is not a solo, but a chorus of many voices, many sorts of men, under many circumstances, in many generations. And these experts in the devout life all unite in a harmonious conception of what makes true joy. The Beatitudes of the Psalter are the anticipation of, and in fact identical with the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount. For the conditions of human blessedness are always the same, and the essence of true religion is one, and its effects uniform, in every age of the Church and stage of Revelation. The various instances of the occurrence of this phrase teach us the elements of human blessedness—in our relation to God, in our conduct, and in our circumstances. A. M.

1. Blessed. Christ opens the Sermon on the Mount with His "Blessed," "Blessed" are the people of a certain sort. To the Psalmist and to Christ; in life and at the judgment, in this world and in the next world, are two sorts of folk, two only, the godly and the ungodly, the righteous and the wicked. They move on different lines, even when they walk side by side and live under the same roof. They are ruled by different motives, they are seeking different ends. *Haydn.*—Blessednesses are to him; blessings of all kinds, enough to make him completely happy; no ingredients of happiness shall be wanting to him. When he undertakes to describe a blessed man, he describes a good man; for, after all, those only are truly happy that are holy; and we are more concerned to know the way to blessedness than to know wherein blessedness will consist. Nay, goodness and holiness are not only the way to happiness, but happiness itself. That man is a happy man that keeps in the way of duty. H.

A kind of climax has been noticed in the choice of expressions. Thus we have, first, three degrees of habit in the verbs "walked," "stood," "sat;" next, three degrees of evil in the character: the "wicked," described as the passionate or restless; or perhaps, simply, as the unrighteous, the false; "the sinners," as the active habitual doers of iniquity; "the mockers," who make an open scoff, and blasphemous; lastly, three degrees of openness in the evil-doing: the "counsel" referring apparently to hidden designs; "the way" to public life; "the seat" or "assembly," to a deliberate confederacy in wickedness. P.

Walking—standing—sitting—these are the three stages. *Counsel—way—seat*—these are

the three steps. Thoughts lead to deeds, and deeds to habits. Take care of the starting-point, for the walk makes the way, and the way makes the end. These are the three dreadful steps: Neglecting (Heb. 2:3); rejecting (Heb. 12:25); despising (Heb. 10:28). *Pearse.*—Men are usually first corrupted by bad counsel and company, which is called "walking in the counsel of the ungodly;" next they habituate themselves to their vicious practices, which is "standing in the way of sinners;" and then, at last, they take up and settle in a contempt of all religion, which is called "sitting in the seat of the scornful." *Archbishop Tillotson.*

It is clearly said that the wicked have their counsels, sinners their way, and scorers their haunts; and that the man who will be happy must keep out of them all. The man who is happy has so done and so continues, is the idea. The counsels are principles and maxims. The wicked have such in abundance: as to what is fit and right to do in trade; as to keeping the Sabbath; as to the getting and using of money; as to how men are to be amused; as to the training of children; as to the whole domain and claims of religion. Sinners also have their "way"—their manner of life, which matches their counsels. It is called in the Book "a false way," "a crooked way," "a way of darkness," and "a way of death." Blessed is the man who leaves the counsels, the ways and haunts of the wicked, but more blessed he who has always shunned them. Ask the man who has had large and long experience in every sort of evil, but who now has found the penitent's peace and pardon, and hates the paths he once trod in reckless folly—ask him what he would give if he only could forget—if he could banish forever from the chambers of his soul the vile pictures of the life of those dissolute days. What is the price of a pure imagination and a chaste memory! The blood of atonement will not give that, when once they are defiled. No man can get away from his record. Forgiven he may be, but he must remember. Blessed is the man whose feet not only walk in right paths, but whose memory is clean and pure.

2. The positive side of the godly man's character we find summed up in a statement of great brevity: "His delight is in the law of the Lord: and in His law doth He meditate day and night!" The one hundred and nineteenth Psalm is a disclosure of the blessedness of revelation to one who devoutly received it. What light upon the path, what guidance for the steps, what wisdom, what comfort, what inspiration! The man of our time has the light of that day in-

tensified, its wisdom amplified a hundred-fold. "The law of the Lord" now covers the New Testament as well as the Old. Christ is the Wisdom of God. He who spake in divers ways and times by angels and by godly men of old, now speaks by His Son. *Haydn.*

"His delight (or *will*) is in the law of Jehovah." Now this will is that pure satisfaction of the heart in the law which does not ask what the law promises or what it threatens, but only this, that the law is holy, just, and good. It is, therefore, a loving delight in the law, which neither prosperity nor adversity can take away or overcome, but through the midst of want it forces its victorious way; for it shines forth chiefly in adversities. *Luther.*—Sin is not the Christian's element. He may fall into it, but he cannot breathe in it; cannot take delight and continue to live in it; but his delight is *in the law of the Lord*. That is the walk that his soul refreshes itself in; he loves it entirely, and loves it most where it most crosses the remainders of corruption that are in him; he bends the strength of his soul to please God, and aims wholly at that. *Leighton.*

The blessed man grows right up out of the Word of God. He does not *read* it only, does not only *search* it; he *meditates* in it day and night. He lets his thoughts and desires feed upon it. *Pearse.*—By this it appears that his delight is in it, for what we love we love to think of (119 : 97). To meditate on God's Word is to discourse with ourselves concerning the great things contained in it, with a close application of mind, a fixedness of thought, till we be suitably affected with those things, and experience the favor and power of them in our hearts. This we must do, *day and night*; we must have a constant habitual regard to the Word of God as the rule of our actions and the spring of our comforts, and we must have it in our thoughts upon every occasion that occurs, whether night or day. No time is amiss for meditating on the Word of God, nor any time unseasonable for those visits. We must not only set ourselves to meditate on God's Word morning and evening, at the entrance of the day and of the night; but these thoughts should be interwoven with the business and converse of every day, and with the repose and slumbers of every night; *When I awake, I am still with Thee.* H.

Meditation doth discriminate and characterize a man; by this he may take a measure of his heart, whether it be good or bad, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." As the meditation is, such is the man. Meditation is the

touchstone of a Christian; it shows what metal he is made of. It is a spiritual index; the index shows what is in the book, so meditation shows what is in the heart. *T. Watson.*—Meditation chews the cud, and gets the sweetness and nutritive virtue of the Word into the heart and life; this is the way the godly bring forth much fruit. *B. Ashwood.*—Meditation helps judgment, wisdom, and faith to ponder, discern, and credit the things which reading and hearing supply and furnish. It assists the memory to lock up the jewels of divine truth in her sure treasury. It has a digesting power, and turns special truth into spiritual nourishment; and lastly, it helps the renewed heart to grow upward and increase its power to know the things which are freely given to us of God. *N. Renew.*

The blessed man delights in the law of the Lord and *therefore meditates* upon it. And this implies something deeper yet—a delight in the Lord Himself. He loves God, His character and His ways, and so all His works are a joyful study to him. For you notice the emphasis put upon observing, keeping, running in the way of these testimonies; "with my whole heart," says the author of the 119th Psalm. This gives zest to meditation, and interest to every page, to every fresh disclosure of what God is and wants him to be. . . . The secret of what the Bible is to them who delight themselves therein is that it *finds them*, brings them face to face with Him Who is the Life and Light of men, and shows the way for prodigal children back to the Father's house, to peace and rest in Him. And let us not forget that only by brooding over the great things of the Word will they disclose to us their fulness. We are to study as well as read, pray as well as search, and all that we may fix them in our lives, and put our life into them, for ourselves to know the blessedness of him whose delight is in the law of the Lord, whose pleasure it is to walk therein. *Haydn.*

I know not a grander quality of the soul than that quiet calmness which, while it feels deeply, yet remains sovereign over the feelings, and in which lordly reason sits upon the throne. Superior to this in usefulness, and not below it as a source of power, is that steady, unwearied progress which is the result of permanent convictions, which is attended not with violent feelings, rising like gusts to-day and dying down to-morrow, but with an undercurrent of soul which "runs, and as it runs, forever will run on." Such characters are like the mountains for majestic repose; they are like perennial

deep streams for constancy. Such characters we may have, if we mingle meditation on divine truth with activity in works of usefulness. T. D. W.

3. The figure which follows possessed for an Eastern mind a vividness of which we can form but a faint conception. When all else was parched and sterile, the "brooks of water" and the "torrent-beds" had their bright strip of verdure (1 Kings 18 : 5). There the grass was freshest and greenest, and there the trees flourished most luxuriantly. P.—The charming figure of a tree, ever green, thrifty, flourishing, and fruitful sets forth prosperity. In Palestine, vegetables of annual growth might fail through drought; but the tree (*e.g.*, the fig, olive, or palm), deep-rooted, beside living waters, whose leaf never withered, and its fruit never failed, became a true type of the good man whose life could never be a failure—whose work was evermore sure to prosper. C.

The Blessed Man is like a tree planted, not growing wild; pruned and brought under Divine culture, not left to the natural workings of mind and heart; brought into circumstances and relations favorable to his highest development, not left to chance influences in this untoward world, to be sapped at the root by his vices, consumed by his appetites and passions, but planted, cared for, and brought forward in the garden of the Lord, whose trees are full of sap. Planted by the rivers of water brings into view the sources of nourishment, growth, fruit-bearing, the careful husbandry employed. God is the source of supply which by the channels of His grace is conveyed to men. The Incarnation, the gift of the Holy Spirit, His blessed Word and appointed ordinances, these go to the roots of being; they satisfy the heart of the Blessed Man, and out of the heart are the issues of life. *Haydn.*

The man who delights in God's Word, being taught by it, bringeth forth patience in the time of suffering, faith in the day of trial, and holy joy in the hour of prosperity. S.—He has comfort in the depths of affliction, strength in the hour of temptation, and comes forth unharmed from the perils of the world, rejoicing in the labors and tears that assure him a rich harvest of glory. Whether the powers of reason crave the loftiest subjects for their exercise; or the imagination asks the widest field wherein to expatiate; or the spirit of devotion seeks an exhaustless store of aliment—all is found here. For the ignorant there is overflowing instruction in its simplest forms; for the learned there are mysteries without end, profound enough to

engage and baffle an angel's powers; for the careless and the headstrong there is reproof uttered in the strongest terms; for the timid and irresolute there are encouragement and assurance in the most soothing language; for the erring there are directions that none can misunderstand; for the presumptuous warnings given in tones of thunder, and for the broken-hearted consolation is poured forth "in strains as sweet as angels use." It is a mine of unfathomable wealth, and fully yields its soul-enriching treasures to the search of the diligent, while it leaveth poverty enough to him that dealeth in it with a slack hand. *R. S. Storrs, Sr.*

Character should grow, like a tree, at both ends. Upward, it should send forth a trunk, strong, erect, and stately, together with branches numerous, graceful, and widespread. It should shed a benign shade for refuge from the heat; and it should be filled to the top with flowers and fruits for beauty and for food. But no such development in mid-air is possible unless the tree grows deeply at the other end, shooting its roots far down and in widening circles, seeking moisture and nutriment. There must be this unseen, this secret life. The roots of the soul, with their myriads of fibres, must take firm and deep hold in the soil of God's truth, and absorb the elements of the new life by meditation and prayer, by communion with Christ and the fellowship of the Spirit. *H. M. Scudder.*—All the sap and nourishment that the branches of a tree have they receive from the root. This shadows out unto us that our life, growth, strength, and all our spiritual acts are from Christ. He is the root and stock of every believer, and all spiritual life is from Him; not only the principles of grace, but also the workings of grace. *Aug.*

His fruit in his season. A godly education, under the influences of the Divine Spirit, which can never be withheld where they are earnestly sought, is sure to produce the fruits of righteousness; and he who reads, prays, and meditates, will ever see the *work* which God has given him to do; the *power* by which he is to perform it; and the *times, places, and opportunities* for doing those things by which God can obtain most glory, his own soul most good, and his neighbor most edification. *A. Clarke.*—His conscience shall be reinforced and become increasingly tender; his heart shall be elevated in its affections and longings; and his mind shall be trained to what is high and holy. Thus is the whole being enriched and the life enlarged. *Edgar.*

Moral growths do not all fructify at the same

time or rate. No workman of God need be disheartened because his fruit season comes late. The latest fruit is usually the best. But, early or late, the fruit of godly character is seasonable. It will be found that God nourishes His men as He does the fruits of the earth, to meet the demands of special seasons; and that in each individual character Divine graces fructify as the occasion demands—courage for seasons of danger, patience for seasons of suffering, strength for seasons of trial, wisdom for seasons of difficulty, words spoken in season—in short, the beautiful fitness of godliness is no less remarkable than its fruitfulness. V.

His leaf shall not wither. Even the *leaf* of those who bring forth only the leaves of profession, without any good fruit, will wither, and they shall be as much ashamed of their profession as ever they were proud of it; but if the word of God rule in the heart, that will keep the profession green, both to our comfort and credit; the laurels thus won shall never wither. H.—His leaf also shall not wither; showing how the Divine culture looks after the details of the life of the Blessed Man—even the leaf, soonest to feel exposure, soonest to show lack of the conditions of health, shall not wither; assurance that God's supply reaches to the minute necessities and providential emergencies of the life of His children. *Haydn.*

And all, or every thing, which he, the man represented by the verdant fruitful tree, shall do, he shall make to prosper, or do prosperously, with good success. This pleasing image is in perfect keeping with the scope of the Psalm, which is not to describe the righteous man as such, but the truly happy man, with whom the righteous man is afterward identified. The whole description is not so much a picture drawn from real life, as an ideal standard or model, by striving to attain which our aims and our attainments will be elevated, though imperfect after all. A.—It is a most astonishing promise to give to men; yet here, as all through this Psalm, the correspondence with the broader thought of the New Testament is marked. “All things are yours” because you are God's. Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper, because he is planted in God's garden, by God's rivers, and this suggests a very important thought as to the standard of prosperity. If it is prosperity which comes from God, it must be measured by God's rule—and that is quite another rule from men's—so that with reference to a large number of godly men the world is disposed to deny this statement and to say it is rather the other way; whatsoever he doeth

does *not* prosper. He has sickness and financial disaster; his plans miscarry; he has tribulation, distress, nakedness and peril. Yet it by no means follows that he does not prosper according to a different and a higher standard. V.

This is not to be apprehended in a mercantile sense—nor is it to be viewed as though success, as men term it, were identical with prosperity. Success may be all one with sheer, irretrievable ruin. Defeat may mean good fortune. Adversity, as men esteem it, is oft-times a godly man's prosperity, attended by a positive increase of his blessedness. The thought moves on the higher plane which contemplates a man as a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven, to whom this world yields its fruits of increase according to the laws that rule therein; and to him accrues the advantage which belongs in this world, to integrity of character and uprightness of moral purpose. *Haydn.*—Outward prosperity, if it follow close walking with God, is sweet; as the cipher, when it follows a figure, adds to the number, though it be nothing in itself. *Trapp.*

The spiritual plant of God is placed by the running waters; it is nourished and recruited by the never-failing, the daily and hourly supply of their wholesome influences. It grows up gradually, silently, without observation; and in proportion as it rises aloft, so do its roots, with still less observation, strike deep into the earth. Year after year it grows more and more into the hope and the posture of a glorious immobility and unchangeableness. What it has been, that it shall be; if it changes, it is as growing into fruitfulness, and maturing in its fruit's abundance and perfection. Nor is that fruit lost; it neither withers upon the branches nor decays upon the ground. Angels unseen gather crop after crop from the unwearied, never-failing parent, and carefully store them up in heavenly treasure-houses. The servant of God resembles a tree in his graciousness; in his fruitfulness; in his immobility. *Newman.*

The great lesson, then, of this first part of the Psalm is—Holiness is happiness, security, stability, fruitfulness; and holiness is based solely upon the law of God. Within the sphere of that law, as in a sheltered and well-watered garden, are all the fountains which minister to perfect blessedness and to permanent efficiency. V.—The man who loves God and keeps His statutes with his whole heart has a counsel, a way, a resort, which are intensified in sweetness and significance as he goes on; the very opposite of the counsel of the ungodly, the way of sinners and the seat of the scornful.

His counsel, his way, his haunts, are full of Divine Wisdom and ennobling fellowships. In harmony with God and His laws, in love with His works and ways, in faith of His providence over him, the man is blessed—any man may be. Conscience approves. The outer world utters a benediction. So does every pure and right-minded man. Deep calleth unto deep, “It is well.” In sickness and in health; at home, abroad; awake, asleep; in life, in death, “It is well!” “It is well!” *Haydn.*

4. The ungodly are not so. No one pretends that every man who is not an avowed servant of God is a defier of all moral obligation. No one denies that such often exhibit the loveliest moral traits; but God’s tests go straight through these superficial developments of character, down to the roots of character. Where is it planted? Whence does it get its impulse? What gives it its ultimate law? The Bible is concerned only with the question of allegiance to God. It puts us to this simple test—God’s servant or not? That *not* contains the germs of all moral disaster. Thus we are prepared for the sharp contrast here introduced: “The ungodly are *not so*.” The Psalmist does not dwell upon the details of their ungodliness. As in the case of the righteous, he confines himself to indicating the sources of their life, and passes over all that intervenes, until the judgment. The great object of this introductory Psalm is to show us *the fountain-heads* of moral character. Its developments of both kinds we find in abundance throughout the Book of Psalms; but in this the proper truth to be set forth is the fundamental one, that all true fruitfulness of character is found in God’s garden only; in being planted by God’s hand and by God’s rivers, and that all barrenness and uselessness result from being *not so*. V.

Like the chaff that the wind driveth away. We do not get the full force of the imagery, till on some Eastern threshing-floor, like that of Araunah, the Jebusite, on some high hill exposed to the winds of heaven, we see the husbandman tossing his grain into the air, that the wind may separate the chaff and carry it away. A more striking contrast it is hardly possible to conceive. *Haydn.*—They are without root below, without fruit above, without vital force and freshness, lying loose upon the threshing-floor, and fleeing away if a wind but blows; so altogether null and unstable are they. D.—The chaff, which only lives by the grain, which feeds no one, which has no power of reproduction, is driven away.

So it is the law, the unchanging law of God, that the life which *gives nothing* has no place in His Divine order; that the life which is bound to no other life by God’s laws of love and of ministry, but is self-centred, is a light, useless life, to be shaken to the four winds when God shall shake heaven and earth. V.

5. Therefore, because they are unlike a living tree, and like the worthless chaff, fit only to be scattered by the wind, wicked (men) shall not stand, i.e., stand their ground or be able to sustain themselves, in the judgment; i.e., at the bar of God. This includes two ideas, that of God’s unerring estimation of all creatures at their real value, and that of His corresponding action toward them. A.—This part of the Psalm is an almost literal anticipation of the parable of the tares. Tares and wheat are in the same field, as wheat and chaff are on the same threshing-floor. The tares, for the time, enjoy immunity for the wheat’s sake. So the chaff, while it keeps close to the wheat, enjoys some privileges for the wheat’s sake. In the world, good and evil grow together. But there is coming a day of judgment whose searching tests shall make clearly manifest what is wheat and what is chaff. In that day of fearful winnowing what hypocrisies shall be disengaged from their goodly wrappings, what self-deceptions, what imposing phantoms of greatness and usefulness and goodness driven away like morning mist. V.

Here it is plainly said—the wicked shall not stand in the judgment. He cannot maintain himself, or hold his ground in that day, at that tribunal. Here and now, he often more than holds his own. He is victorious. Here and now, he often seems to own the tribunal that is to pass upon his case. Here and now, he is often taken for what he is not. But at the judgment every mask is dropped. Character stands forth in its naked truthfulness. The counsel of the wicked will not abide, and he who walked in it is driven away, like the chaff out of the threshing-floor. Hitherto, he has presented himself among his fellows, in the mart of business, in social festivities, in worshipping assemblies, where lines are never sharply drawn—where men grow together as do wheat and tares. But this is to end, as every man goes to his own place. The judgment does not make character, but declares it; and that separateness which has been so real in spirit is now to take effect in the formal act of separation. “Sinners shall not stand in the congregation of the righteous.” Thus was foreshadowed what is so impressively set forth

by our Lord Himself, in one of His latest discourses. The conclusion is not an event detached from the life that lies behind it, but its immediate consequence. The chain is as unbroken as that betwixt seed-sowing and harvest. To stand on the right or the left hand of the Judge, men's lives are all the time fitting them; and choices, fellowships and deeds are all the time charging life with bane or blessing; they are shaping a sinner or a saint. That such a final separation should come is both reasonable and beneficent. It is solemnly declared to lie before us all. *Haydn.*

6. Knoweth. Regards with watchful care and love (31 : 7 ; 144 : 3). The participle denotes that this is the *character* of Jehovah. **P.—The ungodly perish.** Their doom is to be disowned of God, condemned, and made monuments of His eternal justice. C.

Here, then, is the contrast between the two portions of this Psalm. Here is the fruitful, cherished tree, and here the driving chaff. On the one side, stability, Divine culture, fruitfulness; on the other, instability, uselessness, ruin. On the one side, a law which nourishes every form of goodly power, and provides every variety of instruction and of comfort; on the other, license which dissipates power, begets restlessness, and ends in worthlessness. On the one side, a Divine vindication; on the other, a Divine exposure. Which shall be our portion? Where our place? In the garden beside the river of God, or on the threshing-floor at the mercy of the wind? V.

The Psalm teaches that the keeping of God's commandments, which is blessedness, must spring from the inward consent and delight of the heart in the law. Reluctant obedience has no blessedness in it. The name of it is slavery. Many professing Christian people would very much like to do the thing that they think they durst not do—I was going to say, then they may as well do them! That would be an exaggeration, but yet it would be in the direction of the truth. For a man that refrains from profitable or pleasant infractions of the law of righteousness because, and only because, he thinks he ought, and who keeps hanker, hanker, hankering after the things that he is too much of a coward to do, has a very imperfect righteousness, if he has any at all. The first thing that we have to see to is to bring our hearts into harmony with the commandments, and only then is obedience blessedness, when it is

the spontaneous and thorough expression of our delight in the law, which again is the child of our love to the Lawgiver. A. M.

With reason is the decalogue filled with thousand-*nots*. It marks a tendency, that this is so; a tendency to evil, to false gods, to lying, stealing, coveting, killing; a tendency in men to walk in the counsel of the wicked, to stand in the way of sinners, to sit in the seat of the scornful. "Thou shalt not," is the Lord's obstruction in the way. He that gives rein to this tendency must break over Divine command. "Thou shalt not," arrests attention, gives time for thought, and the better, brighter way presents itself, and if accepted, entered, enjoyed, the commands, the "*nots*" become of little value, and less necessity. He who loves virtue need not be told to hate vice. He who is wedded to truth need not be told to abhor lying. *Haydn.*

There are few Christian duties more neglected than that of meditation, the very name of which has fallen of late into comparative disuse—that augurs ill for the frequency of the thing. We are so busy thinking, discussing, defending, inquiring; or preaching, and teaching, and working, that we have no time and no leisure of heart for quiet contemplation, without which the exercise of the intellect upon Christ's truth will not feed, and busy activity in Christ's cause may starve the soul. A. M.

We observe two classes of men answering to those outlined in this Psalm. Look at representative men on either side. In them principles have gone to seed. One class, rooted in the love of God, in principles of righteousness, in the hearts of men, in the well-being of society. The longer they live, the more a blessing they are, the more needful to society; old age, a crown of glory to them, their counsel esteemed, their character venerated, their name cherished. Another class there is, rooted in no good thing, doing nothing to make their life essential to society, nothing to command the veneration of men, nothing to make their memory green when gone.

Is life worth living? Answer it on the plane of the materialist; of life without God and without hope—no! For the most of men—no! Answer it from the heart of him whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates upon it day and night, drinking at this peren-

nial fountain, and rising invigorated, day by day, to make life a series of victories—yes, a thousand times, yes! This book of the Lord counsels us to seek first the kingdom of heaven. Yea, it forbids us to set our affections on the things of earth. It bids us dismiss anxious care; take our losses and disappointments with composure; lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven; use this world and not abuse it; forsake the greedy scramble for wealth; crucify inordinate ambition and live soberly, righteously and godly in this present evil world. So shall all this teeming tide of thought and activity bring to our doors their argosies of wealth to minister to our comfort and our taste, to meet our necessity or swell our abundance, as the case may be; and given or refused we cannot be miserable if we are delight-

ing ourselves in the law of the Lord, and our souls are fed, nourished and satisfied by meditation thereupon! *Haydn.*

The first beatitude of the Psalter is, "Blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord." The last beatitude of the Apocalypse is, "Blessed are they that wash their robes that they may have right to the tree of life." The last explains the first, shows us how it is possible to keep God's commandments, and soars higher than the earlier utterance; giving us a glimpse of the calm delights and immortal joys that wait for us above. Here we drink of the river of His pleasures. There we shall slake our thirst at the fountain-head. Blessed are the living that thus live in the Lord. Yet more "blessed are the dead which thus die in the Lord." A. M.

PSALM II.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND OF HIS CHRIST, TO WHOM EVERYTHING MUST BOW.

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| <p>1 WHY do the nations rage,
And the peoples imagine a vain thing?</p> <p>2 The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against the LORD, and against his Anointed,
<i>saying,</i></p> <p>3 Let us break their bands asunder,
And cast away their cords from us.</p> <p>4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh:
The Lord shall have them in derision.</p> <p>5 Then shall He speak unto them in his wrath,
And vex them in his sore displeasure:</p> <p>6 Yet I have set my King
Upon my holy hill of Zion.</p> <p>7 I will tell of the decree:
The LORD said unto Me, Thou art my Son;
This day have I begotten thee.</p> <p>8 Ask of Me, and I will give <i>Thee</i> the nations
for thine inheritance,
And the uttermost parts of the earth for thy
possession.</p> <p>9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron;
Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a pot-
ter's vessel.</p> <p>10 Now therefore be wise, O ye kings:
Be instructed, ye judges of the earth.</p> <p>11 Serve the LORD with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.</p> | <p>1 Wherefore do the peoples rage,
And the nations meditate vanity!</p> <p>2 The kings of the earth rise in rebellion,
And the rulers take counsel together—
Against Jehovah and against his Anointed.</p> <p>3 "Up! let us break their bonds asunder,
And cast away from us their cords!"</p> <p>4 He who is enthroned in the heavens laughs,
The Lord of all mocks at them.</p> <p>5 Then will He speak to them in his anger,
And in his hot wrath thunder them down:</p> <p>6 "— And yet have I established my King
Upon Zion, my holy hill."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(The Divine King speaks:)</p> <p>7 "I will tell of a decree!
Jehovah said unto Me: Thou art my Son,
I have this day begotten Thee.</p> <p>8 Ask of Me, and I will give Thee nations for
thine inheritance,
And thy possession shall be the ends of the
earth.</p> <p>9 Thou shalt break them with a sceptre of iron,
Like a potter's vessel Thou shalt dash them
in pieces."</p> <p>10 And now, ye kings, show yourselves wise;
Be admonished, ye judges of the earth!</p> <p>11 Serve Jehovah with reverence,
And rejoice with trembling.</p> |
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12 Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish
in the way,
For his wrath will soon be kindled.
Blessed are all they that put their trust in
Him.

12 Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye
perish,
For his anger may easily be kindled—
Blessed are all they that take refuge in Him.
D.

THIS Psalm is Messianic, for it speaks of an Anointed One who transcends all earthly sovereigns; catholic, for it calls the Gentiles into the Church; evangelical, for it announces happiness to all who trust in the Lord; and monitory, for it warns the rebels to make a timely submission. It celebrates the kingly office of the Messiah. M.—In the Messianic Psalms, one King and His reign are distinguished from all kings and reigns before Him. His is a universal Kingdom; the whole earth is His inheritance; all nations are subject to Him, and under His sway righteousness and peace everywhere prevail. It is a Kingdom in permanent form and without end. Jehovah has found One who can be in the highest sense His King and His Priest; and this One, by whom He acts, in all His works, both of judgment and of blessing, is a Son of David. This King is thus distinguished from and lifted up above all of His predecessors. *S. J. Andrews.*

The Psalm celebrates the world-dominion of a king who is a son of David and a Son of God. The occurrences of his time, which determined the mood of the poet, are no longer clear to us. From these occurrences, however, he is transported in thought into the very middle of those commotions among the nations, which issue in their all becoming the kingdoms of God and of His Christ (Rev. 11 : 15 ; 12 : 10). In the New Testament this Psalm is cited more frequently than any other. D.—The proof is most abundant that the inspired apostles saw the Messiah, and Him only, throughout this Psalm. Appealing to it in proof that Jesus of Nazareth is the very Messiah of Old Testament prophecy, of course they assume this to be a prophecy of Him. C.

The second Psalm is a kind of inaugural hymn, intended to celebrate the appointment and final triumph of Jehovah's king. The heathen nations are represented as foolishly opposing it; they agree among themselves to disown and resist it; the Almighty perseveres in His purpose, scorning the rebellious opposition of such impotent adversaries; the eternal decree goes forth that the anointed King is enthroned on Zion; that being Jehovah's Son He is made the heir of all things, even to the uttermost bounds of the habitable globe. And in consideration of what has thus been decreed

and ratified in heaven, the Psalm concludes with a word of friendly counsel and admonition to earthly potentates and rulers, exhorting them to submit in time to the sway of this glorious King, and forewarning them of the inevitable ruin of resistance. That in all this we can trace the lines of Messiah's history is obvious at a glance. P. F.

This Psalm, in the spirit of prophecy, celebrates the inauguration of the Messiah as king in His Church, with authority and power to subdue the world. Neither David nor Solomon could have been the king whom the Psalm celebrates; nor did any subsequent period of the kingdom of Judah answer to these conditions. It was interpreted as a prophecy of Christ by the apostles, when "Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together against the holy child Jesus;" and again by Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where Christ is set above the angels, as the only begotten Son of God. He who was born into the world of a lowly virgin was, before His advent, consecrated in heaven to be King over God's true Israel, with the promise of the universal triumph of His spiritual dominion. This is His coronation-hymn. John, in the Revelation, takes up the strain in a doxology to Christ as having Divine power and glory. J. P. T.

This Psalm rings with the tramp of gathering armies, and notes of lofty challenge addressed by the poet to the invaders of his country. It must have been written at a time when Jerusalem was threatened by a confederacy of hostile powers. It is plain from the language which the poet puts into their mouth—"Let us break their bonds asunder," etc.—that the allies were vassal or tributary monarchs, who, having either been subdued in former wars, or having in some other way tendered their allegiance, had seized this opportunity to assert their independence. We may suppose the song to have been written when the news of their approach reached Jerusalem. The poet encourages his countrymen by reminding them of the covenant made with David's house, and predicts for their enemies a disastrous overthrow. Their enterprise is in its very nature "a vain thing." It cannot but come to naught, because the king whom they would dethrone is the Son

and vicegerent of Jehovah Himself. The poet therefore counsels the rebels to return to their allegiance before it be too late. It is quite impossible now to say what the event was which occasioned this poem. Whatever the event, we need not suppose that the singer himself did not feel that his words went beyond their first occasion. He begins to speak of an earthly king, and his wars with the nations of the earth; but his words are too great to have their meaning exhausted in David, or Solomon, or Ahaz, or any Jewish monarch. Or ever he is aware, the local and the temporal are swallowed up in the universal and the eternal. The king who sits on David's throne has become glorified and transfigured in the light of the promise. The picture is half ideal, half actual. It concerns itself with the present, but with that only so far as it is typical of greater things to come. The true King, who to the prophet's mind is to fulfil all his largest hopes, has taken the place of the visible and earthly king. The nations are not merely those who are now mustering for the battle, but whatsoever opposeth and exalteth itself against Jehovah and His Anointed.

Hence this Psalm is of the nature of a prophecy, and still waits for its final accomplishment. It had a real fulfilment, no doubt, in the banding together of Herod and Pontius Pilate against Christ. But this was not a literal one. Only in a partial sense—rather in the way of application—did the words of this Psalm correspond to that event. But it may be said to have an ever-repeated fulfilment in the history of the Church, which is a history of God's kingdom upon earth—a kingdom which in all ages has the powers of the world arrayed against it, and in all ages with the same disastrous result to those who have risen “against the Lord, and against His Anointed.” And so it shall be to the end, when, perhaps, that hostility will be manifested in some yet deadlier form, only to be overthrown forever, that the kingdoms of this world may become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ. P.

1-3. The Psalm opens abruptly; it is an utterance of amazement, breaking from the lips of one who looks out upon the nations and generations of man. He discerns, in his wide-spread view, one perpetual restlessness, one ceaseless movement of discontent, the throbbing of a rebellion that cannot be appeased, of a vain, bitter, ceaseless revolt. That rebellion against God which in the vast ignorant masses of the world is half unconscious, in their leaders finds utterance, assumes shape and formula.

It is from these men of the sword, paper, tongue, and brain—it is of these the wondering Psalmist challenges an answer. Why does the world fret against the government of God? Is there no better name for the laws of God and His Christ than “bands” and “cords”? If we study the aspects and explanations of the world's rebellion against God, they may be found—in their clearest forms, at least—in the example, and spirit, and teaching of those whom the multitudes blindly follow—godless power, godless wealth, godless intellect. All these are represented among the kings and rulers of the earth. *F. W. Macdonald.*

1. It is Jehovah Himself who is assailed in the person of the king whom He has set on the throne. Such an enterprise cannot but fail. In its very nature it is “a vain thing.” In this word, says Luther, is comprised the argument of nearly the whole Psalm. How can they succeed who set themselves against Jehovah and against His Christ? The abrupt question is in the true spirit of lyric poetry. P.—The interrogation in this verse implies that no rational solution of the strange sight could be given, for reasons assigned in the remainder of the Psalm. This implied charge of irrationality is equally well founded in all cases where the same kind of opposition exists. A.

2. Anointed. The original word here is *Messiah*--the Anointed One, to which the word *Christ* is the Greek equivalent. The idea of anointing comes from the Hebrew practice of inducting their high priests and their kings into office by this ceremony. The history gives prominence to the anointing of Saul, of David, and of Solomon; and says of David, “The Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.” Anointing was the symbol of this Divine unction, and, therefore, makes the names *Messiah* and *Christ* specially significant and appropriate in the case of Him to whom God gave the Spirit “not by measure.” C.—External unction or anointing is a sign, in the Old Testament, of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and especially of those conferred on prophets, priests, and kings, as ministers of the theocracy, and representatives of Christ Himself. To kings particularly, as the highest and most comprehensive order, and peculiar types of Christ in His supremacy as Head of the Church, the sacred history applies the title of *the Lord's Anointed*. A.

3. But the singer not only sees the gathering host; he hears their menace of rebellion: “Let us burst their bonds asunder” (*i.e.*, those of Jehovah and His Christ). The metaphor is

borrowed from restive animals which break the cords, and throw off the yoke. P.—The language of the rebels in the verse before us is a genuine expression of the feelings entertained by the masses of mankind, so far as they have been brought into collision with the sovereignty of God and Christ, not only at the time of His appearance upon earth, but in the ages both before and after that event, in which the prophecy attained its height, but was not finally exhausted or fulfilled; since the same rash and hopeless opposition to the Lord and His Anointed still continues and is likely to continue until the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ (Rev. 11: 15), an expression borrowed from this very passage. A.

4-6. The scene of the first act of this drama is laid on earth; the scene of the second is laid in heaven. As we pass onward we must pass upward. Watching all the turmoil and rebellion, watching below and calmly surveying the most turbulent outbreaks of the heathen as they rage, there sits the King against whose rule this revolt is made. We see in His attitude undisturbed repose and majesty. He occupies a point of observation. He occupies a judicial position. *Mursell.*—The transition here is a sublime one, from the noise and agitation of earth to the safety and tranquillity of heaven. No shifting of the scene could be more dramatic in effect or form. While the nations and their kings exhort each other to cast off their allegiance to Jehovah, and thereby virtually to dethrone Him, He reposes far above them and beyond their reach. A.

4. Shall laugh. Put the Psalmist's bold word here into our feeble prose, and it comes to this. The Psalmist sees the utter futility of revolt against God; he discerns the strength of the Almighty; the pillars of the eternal throne are before his soul; he sees from afar the strength and majesty of God, and looking down upon all the feeble, foolish wisdom of the world that sets itself against God, he can find no other words to express the vanity of man's revolt than to say, "The Lord shall laugh." *F. W. Macdonald.*

There is something very awful in the representation here given of God. First, as if in calm contempt, "He laughs;" then there is the bitter derision which, in its effects, brings their counsels to nought, and baffles their purposes, "He mocks them;" "then," at last, with the thunder of His word He discomfits them. P.—"Who thought," says Luther, "when Christ suffered and the Jews triumphed,

that God was laughing all the time?" Beneath this bold anthropomorphism there is hidden a profound truth—namely, that to all superior beings, and above all to God Himself, there is something in sin not only odious, but absurd, something which cannot possibly escape the contempt of higher, much less of the highest intelligence. A.

6. The words of Jehovah, and the central truth of the Psalm. It is God's own answer to them that oppose Him. I (the pronoun is emphatic in the Hebrew), the King of heaven and earth, have set My own king, My Son and My Vicegerent, on the throne. P.—*And I have constituted My King upon Zion, My hill of holiness, or holy hill, i.e., consecrated, set apart, distinguished from all other hills and other places, as the seat of the theocracy, the royal residence, the capital city, of the Lord and of His Christ, from the time that David took up his abode, and deposited the ark there.* A.

Notice—1. The royal office and character of our glorious Redeemer; He is a King, "This name He hath on His vesture and on His thigh" (Rev. 19: 16). 2. The authority by which He reigns; He is "*My King*," says God the Father, and I have set Him up from everlasting. The world disowns His authority, but I have set Him, I have "given Him to be head over all things to the Church." 3. His particular kingdom over which He rules; it is over "*My holy hill of Zion*"—an eminent type of the Gospel Church. The temple was built upon Mount Zion, and therefore called a *holy hill*. Christ's throne is in His Church, it is His headquarters, and the place of His peculiar residence. *Charnock.*—Christ's throne is set up in His Church—that is, in the hearts of all believers, and in the societies they form. The evangelical law of Christ is said to *go forth from Zion* (Isa. 2: 3; Micah 4: 2), and therefore that is spoken of as the headquarters of this General, the royal seat of this Prince, in whom the children of men shall be joyful. H.

7-9. With inimitable beauty and pertinence the Messiah Himself now appears and speaks, witnessing to His sonship and kingship, and to the constitution—the grand charter of rights—under which this fallen world is given to Him as His empire. C.—No word of transition, no formula of introduction marks this sudden passage from the words of Jehovah to those of His Christ; the singer is a seer; his Psalm is a reflection of what he has seen, an echo of what he has heard. Just as Jehovah in opposition to the rebels acknowledges the King upon Zion, so in opposition to the same rebels the King

upon Zion appeals to Him. D.—He proclaims the Father's counsel concerning Himself. He has received of Jehovah a decree, the new law of His kingdom. He reigns not by the will of man, but by the grace of God; not by right only as the Son of Jehovah, but by covenant and promise likewise. (See the stress laid on this Divine calling as fulfilled in Christ in Heb. 5: 5.) This is true of the type in a primary sense, 2 Sam. 7: 14, "I will be His Father, and He shall be My son." But the emphatic, "This day have I begotten Thee," is true in its highest sense only of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world. (Compare the argument in Heb. 1: 5.) P.

7. The plain thought seems to be: This day, by anointing Thee as King on My hill of Zion, I have recognized Thee as My Son. This enthroning is My public and solemn *recognition* of this relation—the relation being essentially eternal in the past, but never brought forth to the knowledge of created minds till this momentous inauguration as king. So Paul understood this verse, for he finds it fulfilled in Christ's resurrection and consequent ascension and enthronement in heaven. (See Acts 13: 33.) C.

He is the Son of God, and therefore dear to Him, His beloved Son, in whom He is well pleased; and upon this account we are to receive Him as a King; for because *the Father loveth the Son, He hath given all things into His hand* (John 3: 35; 5: 20). Being a Son, He is Heir of all things, and the Father having made the worlds by Him, it is easy to infer thence that by Him also He governs them; for he is the eternal Wisdom and the eternal Word. If God hath said unto Him, "*Thou art My Son,*" it becomes each of us to say to Him, "Thou art my Lord, my Sovereign." H.—No man with a natural conscience but knows that if he lives, moves and has his being, depends for his destiny upon and must have his good and joy from the loving and continual agency of God, he ought to render something to God in return, and he ought to render to God what is His due; and if He is the highest object of knowledge, He ought to be known; if He is worthy of perfect trust, He ought to be trusted, and if He is infinitely lovely and loving, He ought to be loved; and our natural conscience would teach us that we ought to know and love and trust God. Very well; there is no other way to do it, except to take God as God comes to us, and He never comes to any man except in the Son, and He never will. He hath sworn His decree, and He will never take it back.

And not only are we never to know Him except as He is revealed in the Son, but we shall never be able to approach Him except as He comes to us in the Son. *Duryea.*

8. The scene of the last act is once more laid on earth. It intimates the proclamation *here* of the secret decree *there*—the proclamation on earth of the decree of Heaven. What, in point of fact, is this "declaring the decree" but the preaching of the Gospel? The Father not merely gives the throne, but He guarantees by covenant a large kingdom. The heathen are to be given for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. *A. Mursell.*

9. Some readers will ask: Is it not the fair sense of this verse that all the nations promised to Christ as His inheritance and possession are given Him only to be destroyed? To this I answer: It is probably due in part to the salient points of David's own sway over the hostile nations—Philistia, Syria, Moab, Ammon and Edom—that the language of this verse contemplates the subject nations as being crushed by physical power rather than saved by moral. Moreover, this view is in keeping with the leading thought of the Psalm—these nations seen in their malign rage against Jehovah and His anointed Son; and the Lord asserting His infinite right to reign, and giving dominion to His Son that He may reign to the subjugation of every foe. This is one of the main points in this Psalm. Yet v. 8 must contemplate the masses of the nations as converted, to become Christ's true inheritance. The last three verses assume most clearly and delightfully that there is mercy most abundant for the guiltiest rebel who will submit to Christ and be a rebel no more. These "terrors of the Lord" are here for the very purpose of persuading men to be wise and to submit while yet pardon is possible. Beyond all question, the doctrine of the entire Bible, the New Testament and the Old, is that Jesus becomes King and Lord of all, to bring rebels to penitence and penitent souls back to purity and blessedness; but to give the incorrigibly impenitent their righteous doom—remediless ruin. Who will not bow in submission must fall beneath His rod. Justice demands this and Jesus will execute it. Whosoever will may come to Him for life; but whosoever will not have life must have death! It suffices therefore to say of our passage, and indeed of the whole Psalm, that it contemplates as its main theme the case of Christ's enemies in hostile league against Him, but sure to fall beneath His rod unless they will bow to His sceptre. C.

This extensive grant had been accompanied by that of power adequate to hold it. That power was to be exercised in wrath as well as mercy. The former is here rendered prominent, because the previous context has respect to audacious rebels, over whom Messiah is invested with the necessary power of punishment, and even of destruction. This view of the Messiah as a destroyer is in perfect keeping with the New Testament doctrine that those who reject Christ will incur an aggravated doom, and that Christ Himself is in some sense the destroyer of those who will not let Him be their Saviour; or, to borrow terms from one of His own parables, in strict agreement with the scene presented by the Psalm before us, "those Mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before Me." That false view of the Divine nature which regards God as delighting in the death of the sinner is more revolting but not more dangerous than that which looks upon His justice as extinguished by His mercy, and supposes that the death of Christ has rendered perdition impossible, even to those who will not believe in Him. The terms of this verse are repeatedly applied to Christ in the Book of Revelation (2 : 27 ; 12 : 5 ; 19 : 15). A.

10-12. Finally, the poet who has heard the words of Jehovah and the words of His Anointed, seeks by wise counsel to dissuade the rebels from their mad enterprise.

Learn wisdom, receive instruction. Submit yourselves; not only in a political sense, but also in a religious sense—become His true worshippers. In the Jewish mind the two ideas would never be dissociated. P.

12. Kiss the Son. An ancient mode of doing homage or allegiance to a king. Even in modern European courts the kissing of the hand has this significance. In the case before us there may possibly be an allusion to the kiss as a religious act among the heathen. *The Son*, the Son of God, the Messiah, so called by the Jews in Christ's time. A.

He be angry. The office of the Messiah is not only that of one who brings salvation, but also that of one who is a judge. Redemption is the beginning and judgment the end of His work. It is to this end that the Psalm points. D.—The same view of the Messiah as a judge and an avenger, which appeared in v. 9, is again presented here, but only for a moment, and as a prelude to the closing beatitude or benediction. *Blessed (are) all*; oh, the felicities of all—*those trusting Him*, believing on Him, and confiding in Him. This delightful

contrast of salvation and perdition, at one and the same view, is characteristic of the Scriptures, and should teach us not to look ourselves, and not to turn the eyes of others, toward either of these objects without due regard to the other also. A.

Thus closes this sublime and solemnly impressive Psalm. Comparing it with the first Psalm, it ends where that begins—with the blessedness of the righteous. Like that, it makes prominent the heaven-wide contrast between the righteous and the wicked in respect to both present condition and future destiny. Like that, its great moral purpose is to commend true piety; to dissuade men from the ways of sin and rebellion; and to press them to submission to God as the path of life and blessedness. C.

It should be observed that two of the names given by the Jews themselves to the Hope of Israel were taken from this Psalm (and Dan. 9 : 25), the Messiah, v. 2, and the Son of God, v. 7. Both names are joined together by the high priest, Matt. 26 : 63. In like manner the name, Son of man, is taken from Psalm 8 : 4 and Dan. 7 : 13. P.

The Hebrew monarchy presents a clear and unmistakable prophecy of a Divine and everlasting kingdom. We have to trace two distinct lines of thought rising in different ages, and gradually growing into one, till both are fully realized in that kingdom which embraces earth and heaven, and links time with eternity. The first thought is that God alone is the King of Israel, the second that David shall not want a man to sit upon his throne forever. The former belief is by far the more ancient; it was born with the people in their deliverance from Egypt, and became the one enduring foundation of the national polity. Out of this truth grows the national life, and on it are based morality, religion, and law. Hardly less wonderful was the second thought, which sprang up in a later age: that in the little State of Israel a King should be born of the seed of David according to the flesh who should extend His dominion from one end of the earth to the other, and reign as long as the sun and moon endure. To bring this new hope into harmony with the ancient creed that seems so utterly opposed to it, to reconcile the perpetual reign of David's seed with the exclusive sovereignty of Jehovah, is the new task upon which prophecy now enters. The first advance is clearly marked when the title "Messiah,"

hitherto applied only to "the priest that is anointed," is transferred to the promised King. Hannah is the first that so uses it, in her song of thanksgiving (1 Sam. 2 : 10). Observe how carefully the great truth of God's sole sovereignty is guarded in this first announcement of an earthly King. It is still Jehovah that shall judge the ends of the earth ; He shall give strength to the rising monarchy ; He shall anoint, and in anointing choose and consecrate, the human king as His viceroy on earth. In David we have a soul conformed to the ideal of a true king—a soul ready to be quickened and illuminated by the Holy Spirit of prophecy, until, amid the kindling glow of thought, there should shine forth the image of a King like David himself, but fairer than the children of men, One in whom all gifts and graces of which man is capable should be combined with the perfections that belong to God only. *E. H. Gifford.*

The Mediator, the distant hope of whom had cheered the men of ancient times on their passage to the tomb, has come in the fulness of the times to accomplish his mysterious mission, and claim from the height of the cross the fulfilment of the Divine promise, "Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession." The nations belong to Him, He to humanity ; He is prince and pastor, for His sceptre is a crook, and His subjects are sheep whom He feeds and carries in His bosom with a tenderness as great as the power with which He defends, and the authority with which He governs them. His reign is a reign of persuasion and love ; He wishes

none but free subjects, He wishes only to reign over hearts ; He acknowledges for subjects those only who are united to Him by faith, and are desirous to be enlisted to Him only for peace, comfort, joy, and strength. He acknowledges for subjects only those who, acknowledging themselves to be sinners devoid of all glory before God, and incapable of entering by their own strength and their own merits into communion with the Father of spirits, cry for grace and mercy at the foot of His cross, and expect nothing in earth or heaven except from His powerful mediation. *A. Vinet.*

For professedly Christian nations, churches, institutions, their relation of earnest loyalty and faithfulness, or otherwise, to Him and to the beneficent work of His Kingdom, is decisive of their destiny ; since for the work of that Kingdom, and for the glory of its King, they exist, as means to ends. Christ's law is the law of right. His Kingdom is the kingdom of light, of purity, of peace, of love, of brotherly kindness between man and man, between class and class ; the kingdom of hope, for time and for eternity, and of endless progress for human nature. *Medd.*—In spite of all man's sin, the world does prosper marvellously, miraculously ; in spite of all, God is stronger than the devil, life stronger than death, wisdom stronger than folly, order stronger than disorder, fruitfulness stronger than destruction ; and they will be so more and more, till the last great day, when Christ shall have put all enemies under His feet and death is swallowed up in victory, and all mankind in one fold, under one Shepherd, Jesus Christ, the righteous King of all. *Kingsley.*

PSALM III.

A PSALM OF DAVID, WHEN HE FLED FROM ABSALOM HIS SON.

1 LORD, how are mine adversaries increased !
Many are they that rise up against me.
2 Many there be which say of my soul,
There is no help for him in God. [Selah
3 But thou, O LORD, art a shield about
me ;
My glory, and the lifter up of mine head.

4 I cry unto the LORD with my voice,
And he answereth me out of his holy hill. [Selah
5 I laid me down and slept ;
I awaked ; for the LORD sustaineth me.
6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of the
people,
That have set themselves against me round
about.

7 Arise, O LORD ; save me, O my God :
For thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon
the cheek bone ;

Thou hast broken the teeth of the wicked.
8 Salvation belongeth unto the LORD :
Thy blessing be upon thy people. [Selah

THIS Psalm and that which follows were written by David when he fled from his son Absalom. Both Psalms, it has been conjectured, were composed on the same day ; the one in the morning, the other in the evening, of the day following that on which the king quitted Jerusalem. The words are the words of one who had often sought and found help from God ; and who even in this his sorest strait calmly reposes, knowing that Jehovah is his glory and the lifter-up of his head. From v. 5 we gather that the Psalm is a morning hymn. With returning day there comes back on the monarch's heart the recollection of the enemies who threaten him—a nation up in arms against him, his own son heading the rebellion, his wisest and most trusted counsellor in the ranks of his foes. Never, not even when hunted by Saul, had he found his position one of greater danger. The odds were overwhelmingly against him. This is a fact which he does not attempt to hide from himself : “How many are mine enemies ;” “Many rise up against me ;” “Many say to my soul ;” “Ten thousands of the people have set themselves against me.” Yet he is not crushed ; he is not desponding. Enemies may be thick as the leaves of the forest, and earthly friends may be few, or uncertain, or far off. But there is one Friend who cannot fail him, and to Him David turns with a confidence and affection which lift him above all his fears. Never had he been more sensible of the reality and preciousness of the Divine protection. If he was surrounded by enemies, Jehovah was his shield. If Shimei and his crew turned his glory into shame, Jehovah was his glory ; if they sought to revile and degrade him, Jehovah was the lifter-up of his head. Nor did the mere fact of distance from Jerusalem separate between him and his God. He had sent back the ark and the priests ; for he would not endanger their safety, and he did not trust in them as a charm, and he knew that Jehovah could still hear him from “His holy mountain” (v. 4), could still lift up the light of His countenance upon him, and put gladness in his heart (4 : 6, 7). Sustained by Jehovah, he had laid him down and slept in safety ; trusting in the same mighty protection, he would lie down again to rest. Enemies might taunt (v. 2), and friends might fail him ; but the victory was Jehovah's, and he could break the teeth of the ungodly (vs. 7, 8). P.

One day of David's life has been more fully chronicled than any other day in the Bible—the day when he halted after Shimei's curses, and the king and all the people rested, weary and heart-sick. The next morning “David arose, and all the people that were with him ; by the morning-light there lacked not one of them that was not gone over Jordan.” To that morning and the following night, in all probability, belong the third and the fourth Psalms. Yet, while those Psalms arose from the occasion, they suit every Christian generation. *Bishop Alexander.*

2. No help for him in God. Had David's foes said of him, He deserves no help from God, he would readily have owned this as a great truth. As God's children are comforted by the truth, so the enemy advances lies to distress them. When he attacks their faith and comfort, he boldly impeaches the love and faithfulness of their God. *W. Mason.*

Selah. The first stanza, or double verse, closes, like the second and fourth, with the word *Selah*. This term occurs seventy-three times in the Psalms and three times in the prophecy of Habakkuk. It corresponds to *rest*, either as a noun or verb, and like it is properly a musical term, but generally indicates a pause in the sense as well as the performance. Like the titles, it invariably forms part of the text. In the case before us, it serves as a kind of devout ejaculation to express the writer's feelings, and at the same time warns the reader to reflect on what he reads, just as our Saviour was accustomed to say, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. A.

Art thou beset with distress of soul, or surrounded with troubles and difficulties ? art thou singing a melancholy note ? “Selah,” saith David ; pause, consider this ; lift up thy mind to attend, how dishonorable to thy God, how destructive to thy faith, peace, love, and holiness is this ! Hear the voice of thy Saviour. His word is adapted to thy circumstances, however distressing or desperate. *W. Mason.*

3. Every hour he has reason to fear an attack that will annihilate him ; but Jehovah is the shield that covers him before and behind. His kingdom has been taken from him, but Jehovah is his glory. With covered and sunk head he went up the Mount of Olives, but Jehovah is the lifter up of his head, inasmuch as He comforts and helps him. D.—An active believer,

the more he is beaten off from God, either by the rebukes of Providence or the reproaches of enemies, the faster hold he will take of Him, and the closer will he cleave to Him ; so David here, when his enemies said, *There is no help for him in God*, cries out with so much the more assurance, "*But Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me* ; let them say what they will, I am sure Thou wilt never desert me, and I am resolved, I will never distrust Thee." H.

4. Expresses not a single act, but the habit of a life. Whenever I cry, God hears me from His holy hill, *i e.*, Zion, where was the ark of the covenant. P —Care and grief do us good and no hurt, when they set us a praying, and engage us, not only to speak to God, but to cry to Him, as those that are in earnest. H.

Here again the strophe ends with a devout and meditative pause, denoted as before by *Selah*. A.

5. I laid me down—I went to sleep—I woke up again—for Jehovah sustaineth me ; His hand is my pillow. 6. Then from that thought there arose fresh confidence in his heart, "I will not be afraid of countless hosts." P.—The same courage, which enabled him to sleep without disturbance in the midst of enemies and dangers, still sustained him when those enemies and dangers were presented to his waking senses. A.

Awakening in health and strength, he feels grateful to Him to whom he owes it. It is the consequence of the fact, that Jehovah supports him, that God's hand is his pillow. Because this loving, almighty hand is under his head, he is unapproachable, and therefore also void of fear. D.—We lie down, and sleep, and awake again to the light and comfort of another day ; and whence is it, but because the Lord has sustained us with sleep as with food ? We have been safe under His protection, and easy in the arms of His good providence. H.—God is Alpha and Omega in the great world ; endeavor to make Him so in the little world ; practise to make Him thy last thought at night when thou sleepest, and thy first thought in the morning when thou awakest ; so shall thy fancy be sanctified in the night, and thy understanding rectified in the day ; so shall thy rest be peaceful, thy labors prosperous, thy life pious, and thy death glorious. *Quarles*.—Thy bed, when thou liest down in it, preacheth to thee thy grave ; thy sleep, thy death ; and thy rising in the morning, thy resurrection to judgment. *Bunyan*.

I will not be afraid. It makes no matter what our enemies be, though for number,

legions ; for power, principalities ; for subtlety, serpents ; for cruelty, dragons ; for vantage of place, a prince of the air ; for maliciousness, spiritual wickedness ; stronger is He that is in us, than they who are against us ; nothing is able to separate us from the love of God. In Christ Jesus our Lord, we shall be more than conquerors. *W. Cowper*.

7. "Save me, O my God ;" mine by covenant ; mine by the full choice of my soul ; mine by long years of trustful service on my part and precious mercies on Thine. For I have this assurance of relief to-day, that Thou hast oftentimes interposed to smite down my foes ; therefore Thou surely wilt again. C.

8. *Salvation belongeth unto the Lord* ; He has power to save, be the danger ever so great ; it is His prerogative to save, when all other helps and succors fail ; it is His pleasure, it is His property, it is His promise to those that are His, whose salvation is not of themselves, but of the Lord. Therefore all that have the Lord for their God, according to the tenor of the new covenant, are sure of salvation ; for He that is their God, is the God of salvation. H.

7, 8. His imprecations are not directed against His people, but only against those who have seduced them, and their wicked partisans. As in olden times, He still bears His people upon a loving, interceding heart. He commiserates those who have been led astray, without being angry with them. Distinctions vanish altogether from His mind, when He prays for the nation as a whole. The one concluding expression of the Psalm—remarks Ewald—throws a bright light into the depths of his noble soul. D.

Considerations for the Uniform Use of "JEHOVAH" in Place of "LORD." There are very cogent grounds for the change. 1. In the first place, our translators in their use of the word "Lord" make no distinction between two names, "Jehovah" and "Adonai," perfectly distinct in Hebrew, and conveying different conceptions of God. 2. In the next place, it is well known that whole Psalms are characterized, just as sections of the Pentateuch are characterized, by peculiar names of God, and it is surely of some importance to retain as far as possible these characteristic features, especially when critical discussions have made them prominent, and questions of age and authorship have turned upon them. 3. It has been held by very good authorities to be a desirable emendation in our Authorized Version. "Why continue the

translation of the Hebrew into English," says Coleridge, "at second hand, through the medium of the Septuagint? Have we not adopted the Hebrew word *Jehovah*? Is not the Kurios, or Lord, of the Septuagint, a Greek substitute in countless instances for the Hebrew, *Jehovah*? Why not, then, restore the original word; and in the Old Testament religiously render Jehovah, by Jehovah; and every text in the New Testament, referring to the Old, by the Hebrew word in the text referred to?" No one could be a better judge on such a point than one who, like Coleridge, was both poet and critic. 4. If owing to merely superstitious scruples the name fell out of use in the Jewish Church, and if owing to a too slavish copying of the Greek and Latin versions our own version lost the word, these are reasons of no force whatever

against a return to the original use. It is no doubt a question how the word should be written when transferred to another language. "Jehovah" certainly is not a proper equivalent for the Hebrew form; for it is well known that the Jews, having lost the true pronunciation of the name, transferred to it the vowels of the other name "Adonai," which in reading they have for centuries substituted for it. Some of the Germans write "Jahveh," others "Jahaveh;" and Hupfeld, despairing of any certainty as to the vowels, retains merely the consonants and writes "Jhvh." Probably the most correct equivalent in English would be "Yahveh" or "Yahaveh," but this would look pedantic, and would doubtless shock sensitive eyes and ears far more than the comparatively familiar form, Jehovah. P.

PSALM IV.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN; ON STRINGED INSTRUMENTS. A PSALM OF DAVID.

- 1 ANSWER me when I call, O God of my righteousness;
Thou hast set me at large *when I was* in distress:
Have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.
- 2 O ye sons of men, how long shall my glory
be turned into dishonour?
How long will ye love vanity, and seek after
falsehood? [Selah]
- 3 But know that the LORD hath set apart him
that is godly for himself:
The LORD will hear when I call unto him.
- 4 Stand in awe [*be ye angry*], and sin not:
Commune with your own heart upon your
bed, and be still. [Selah]

- 5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness,
And put your trust in the LORD.
- 6 Many there be that say, Who will shew us
any good?
LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.
- 7 Thou hast put gladness in my heart,
More than *they have* when their corn and their
wine are increased.
- 8 In peace will I both lay me down and
sleep:
For thou, LORD, alone makest me dwell in
safety.

DAVID had said in the previous Psalm, "I laid me down and slept;" he says in this, "I will lay me down in peace, and sleep." That was a morning, this is an evening, hymn. That was written with a deep sense of thankfulness for the undisturbed rest which had followed the most anxious, in some respects the dreariest, day of his life; this was written with a calm confidence, flowing directly from the previous experience. The interval between the two Psalms may only have been the interval between the morning and evening of the same day. The thoughts and turns of expression in the one are not unlike those in the other.

As in the former he heard many saying to his soul, "There is no help for him in God" (v. 2), so in this he hears many saying, "Who will show us any good?" (v. 6.) As in that he knew that, though at a distance from the tabernacle, he was not at a distance from God, but would receive an answer to his prayer from the "holy mountain" (v. 4), so in this, though the priests have returned with the ark to Jerusalem, he can look for "the light of Jehovah's countenance," which is better than the urim and thummim of the priestly ephod.

The Psalm opens with a short prayer, in which David's faith stays itself on his experi-

ence of past mercies. Then his thoughts run upon his enemies, on the curses of Shimei, on the treachery of Ahithophel. "Oh, ye sons of men,"—thus he turns to address them, and the expression denotes persons of rank and importance—"how long will ye turn my glory into shame?" How long will ye trample my honor as a king in the dust, refusing me the allegiance which is my due? How long will ye love vanity (or emptiness), and seek after lies? How is it that ye are bent on this mad enterprise, and persist in using the weapons of falsehood and slander to my prejudice? He reminds them that, in assailing him, they are assailing not him, but God, who chose him and appointed him to his office (v. 3). "For them, if his words could reach them, as they were lying down to rest in the pride of their successful plots, his counsel would be, 'Stand in awe, and sin not; commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.' Let the watches of the night be given to self-searching; let the voice of scorn and reviling be hushed in silence. Then, when that scrutiny and solemn awe have done their work, and repentance comes, 'offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord.'" (*Plumptre.*) Once more David, ere he lies down to rest, lifts his eyes to heaven. Many, in such circumstances, might be ready to despair; many, probably, among his own friends, were then saying, "Who will show us any good?" David knows where true good is to be found. There is a light which can "lighten his darkness," whether it be the darkness of night or the darkness of sorrow. The light of God's countenance lifted up upon him can fill his heart with greater joy than the joy of the threshing-floor or the vintage. And in that confidence he can lie down and take his rest, knowing that Jehovah Himself will keep him in the watches of the night. It is worthy of notice that David does not cry to God for vengeance on his enemies, but earnestly seeks to bring them to a better mind. The strong feeling of injured innocence prompts no thought of revenge, but only the noble desire to teach those who have done the wrong a more excellent way. P.

Everywhere, in the history of the human heart, these two things are found in the hours of our bitter pain: unfathomable desire and want of something more than earth or its love can give, and the consciousness of some one capable of filling the want. Out of these two things, consciousness of an infinite want and an infinite fulness and of the relation of one to the other, springs prayer, the paradox; and what-

ever some may say, it is undeniable that men have received an answer. In this Psalm we have the true amalgam of prayer; trust which boldly claims God; humility that owns the weakness of self. The answer comes at once to such a prayer as it came to David, not as yet in restoration to the kingdom, but in gladness of heart, in peace of heart. *S. A. Brooke.*

1. God of my righteousness. Thou who maintainest my right and my cause, asserting my righteousness against the slanders of my enemies. But not to be confined to this; it also means who knowest the righteousness, the sincerity of my heart and life; and, moreover, art Thyself the ground and source of all righteousness in me. On these two things he builds his plea, God's righteousness as pledged to himself, and God's goodness, as experienced either in past times, or in the present emergency. P.—Jehovah is the possessor of righteousness, the author of righteousness, the vindicator of righteousness that is misjudged and persecuted. David believingly calls this God of righteousness his; for the righteousness that he has he has in Him, and the righteousness that he looks for he looks for from Him. His past experience assures him that he does not look in vain. He grounds his prayer upon two facts: upon his fellowship with God, the righteous One, and upon the justifying grace he has already experienced from Him. Already he has been many a time in straits, and God has set him at large. D.—The suppliant is conscious of his own integrity in the great question at issue between himself and his enemies; in this assurance of his heart he practically says: "I know God will vindicate my cause as His own, since really it is His own," and therefore I can appeal to Him as my ever-righteous God—my Defender and Avenger.

2. Sons of men. Chief men, princes, perhaps the head men of the tribes, who seem generally to have gone into this conspiracy with Absalom. The Hebrew has various words for man; one indicating man as of the earth, frail and weak; another, man as strong, gigantic; and again another, man as of noble rank. The latter is used here. *Selah*, meaning pause, invites to reflection upon the thought just presented, and here, very pertinently. Why should ye, men of noble rank, be so unmanly as to account my real glory to be only my disgrace? C.

3. Godly men are God's separated, sealed ones; He knows them that are His, has set His image and superscription upon them; He distinguishes them with uncommon favors; *They*

shall be Mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up My jewels. Know this; let godly people know it, and let them never alienate themselves from Him to whom they are thus appropriated; let wicked people know it, and take heed how they hurt those whom God protects. H.—We set apart things that are precious; the godly are set apart as God's peculiar treasure (Psalm 135 : 4); as His royal diadem (Isa. 43 : 3); the godly are the excellent of the earth (Psalm 16 : 3); comparable to fine gold (Lam. 4 : 2). They are the glory of the creation (Isa. 46 : 13). Origen compares the saints to sapphires and crystals: God calls them jewels (Mal. 3 : 17). *T. Watson.*

The Lord will hear when I call unto Him. Let us remember that the experience of one of the saints concerning the verity of God's promises and of the certainty of the written privileges of the Lord's people is a sufficient proof of the right which all His children have to the same mercies, and a ground of hope that they also shall partake of them in their times of need. *Dickson.*

4. He passes on to wise and loving counsels. *Tremble, i.e., before God, not before me, and sin not against Him.* The verb expresses any sort of disquietude, or strong emotion, the agitation of anger as well as fear. Hence the rendering of the LXX, "Be ye angry and sin not," *i.e., "do not suffer yourselves to sin in your anger,"* is certainly a possible rendering of the words. Paul (Eph. 4 : 26) uses the words as they stand in the Greek version. P.

The men whose hearts never burn with indignation against cowardice, falsehood, and profligacy—the men whose eyes never flash, whose pulse never quickens, whose words move on in an unbroken flow, and never rush on tumultuously, like a cataract, either in praise or blame—never yet did any work worth doing either for God or man. *R. W. Dale.*—Surely, if we be not thus angry, we shall sin. If a man can be so cool, or without any inward commotion, to suffer God's honor to be trod in the dust, he shall find God justly angry with him for his want of anger. I know not whether it were a praise that were given to Theodorus, that never any man saw him angry; so, as it may fall, an immunity from anger can be no other than a dull stupidity. *Bishop Hall.*—The indignation raised by cruelty and injustice, and the desire of having it punished, which persons unconcerned would feel, is by no means malice; no, it is resentment against vice and wickedness; it is one of the common bonds by which society is held together, a fellow-feeling

which each individual has, in behalf of the whole species as well as of himself, and it does not appear that this, generally speaking, is at all too high among mankind. *Bishop Butler.*

It is as impossible for injustice to be done and resentment not to follow, as it is for the flesh not to quiver on the application of intense torture. Resentment is but the sense of injustice, made more vivid by its being brought home to ourselves; resentment is beyond our control so far. There is no sin in this. But let resentment pass into revenge; let it smoulder in vindictive feeling till it becomes retaliation, and then a natural feeling has grown into a transgression. You have the distinction between these two things clearly marked in Scripture. "Be ye angry"—here is the allowance for the human, "and sin not"—here is the point where resentment passes into retaliation. F. W. R.—It is possible, by the grace of God, to be angered with what a man does without being angered at the man. A true father loves his child through everything. God loves us through everything. "Thou wast a God," said the Psalmist, "that forgavest them, though Thou tookest vengeance of their inventions." "Christ commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." This solves the difficulty of the command, "Be ye angry and sin not;" be angry without sinning; offended at the deed, but tender-hearted toward the doer. C. H. P.

Commune with your own heart. To converse with self we must be alone, our sole companion our own thoughts, our sole witness God and nature. When Isaac would meditate he walked at eventide into the fields where, in the free air and the calm face of nature and the music of creation, he could find what tends to elevate the mind to God. When the Psalmist exhorts men to commune with their own hearts, his counsel to them is to do it by night upon their bed, when all is still around them, and when no flaring lights and no distracting shows will be present to interrupt the current of their thoughts. The din and the daylight of society are hostile to quiet, concentrated, self-searching thought. The man that would truly meditate must bear to be alone. W. L. A.

No man will ever attain to high excellence in what an old divine calls "the life of God in the soul of man" without cultivating stated periods of solitude, and using that solitude for the important purpose of self-knowledge. *Blackie.*—"Quiet thinking seems quite out of fashion, and many know more of what is passing on the other side of the globe than of

the working of their own souls." The weariness so many feel in being alone, the hours often called so "interminable" by young persons and even those in mature life, when by chance they have had no friend to chat with through the afternoon or evening, the long hour and the weariness of the Sabbath to so many if detained from the public services of religion, evince a deep want somewhere, a want of inward resources, and of an independent spiritual life, that augurs but ill for the true well-being and growth of the individual. To live spiritually, to make the unseen real, to feel the constraining influence of spiritual motives and affections, the "still hour," the hour of daily communion with God, is absolutely needed; for if faith without works is dead, faith without prayer and communion is an absolute nonentity. *Phelps.*

Our Lord did not contemplate wildernesses for people of the towns, but He did speak to them about praying in their own rooms with closed doors. Original thought is the only power which rules others. Use yourselves therefore not to live always in a din, not always in a turmoil; let not your character be made up of endless patchwork fragments of the thoughts, the opinions, the feelings, which you have caught from others. *Archbishop Benson.*—A man hath need of a well-set mind when he speaks to himself; for otherwise, he may be worse company to himself than if he were with others. But he ought to endeavor to have a better with him, to call in God to his heart to dwell with him. If thus we did, we should find how sweet this were to speak to ourselves, by now and then intermixing our speech with discourses unto God. For want of this, the most part not only lose their time in vanity in their converse abroad with others, but do carry in heaps of that vanity to the stock which is in their own hearts, and do converse with that in secret which is the greatest and deepest folly in the world. *Leighton.*

When the tumult of his day was over David lay down in his bed, and then God was and David was; there was nothing else for the time. That is the fountain of life to which we have to go to draw life, just to be at peace and let God let us know that He is there; it is just to let all the rest go away, all the troubles and anxieties of life, and let God say to our hearts, "Here I am, and here you are; you are in my charge, and nothing can hurt you; everything is well." Something like that it is between God and the man who knows how to be still. Let God speak to him. And this is what He

wants to bring us to even by means of the tumult of life. *G. Macdonald.*—Be still or quiet, and then commune with your hearts; and if *you* will commune with your hearts, God will come and commune with your hearts too, His Spirit will give you a loving visit and visions of His love. *Caryl.*—It is the reserve that saves us in all final tests—the strength that lies back of what we need in ordinary experiences. Those who daily commune with God, breathing His life into their souls, become strong with that secret, hidden strength which preserves them from falling in the day of trial. They have a "vessel" from which to refill the lamp when its little cup of oil is exhausted. *J. R. M.*

It is by looking up beyond the actual, not by looking down into it, by seeking God within, not by consulting men without, that you will truly measure the Divine claims upon you, and find your duty clear and calm and sacred. Commune with Him, the All Holy, and it will become a secret understanding between His spirit and your own—a trust from Him, answered by assent and love from you. A soul that goes apart with this Divine vision of goodness has that to feed on which others think not of. *Martineau.*—No large growth in holiness was ever gained by one who did not *take* time to be *alone with God*. No otherwise can the great central idea of God enter into a man's life, and dwell there supreme. "Holiness," says Dr. Cudworth, "is something of God, wherever it is. It is an efflux from Him, and lives in Him; as the sunbeams, although they gild this lower world, and spread their golden wings over us, yet they are not so much here where they shine, as in the sun from whence they flow." Such a possession of the idea of God we never gain but from still hours. For such holy joy in God, we must have much of the spirit of Him who rose up a great while before day, and departed into a solitary place and prayed, and who continued all night in prayer; "the morning star finding Him where the evening star had left Him." *Phelps.*

6. A picture of the disquiet and unsatisfied desire arising from the want of faith and righteousness described in the foregoing verse. Of all who do not trust in God it may be said that they are continually asking, *who will show us good*, who will show us wherein happiness consists, and how we may obtain it? *A.*—It is but too apparent that multitudes of men do still exhibit the same temper. They have no relish for spiritual and Divine enjoyments; their only care is "what they shall eat, and

what they shall drink, and wherewithal they shall be clothed." "They labor abundantly for the meat which perisheth, but not at all for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." And though they meet with repeated disappointments in every new experiment; yet instead of seeking after happiness where it is alone to be found, they still renew the fruitless search among the creatures around them, and cry out with as much keenness as ever, "Who will show us any worldly good?" *R. Walker.*

Either in the pauses of business, or as their whole employment, great numbers of persons spend their time in seeking amusement, recreation, the satisfying of curiosity, appetite or passion. This host includes most who are in youth, but many also who tread on the confines of age. They are living as though they had no souls. They are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. It is common to speak of such as amiable and good natured, or as injuring none but themselves. But no persons are more intensely selfish than the confirmed devotees of pleasure. Their motto is, Who will show us any good? What shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed? There are none more bound to the earth. There is no temper more incompatible with religion, or with the serious pursuit of it. Hence the reiterated injunctions of our Lord to those who would follow Him, to leave all, to deny themselves, and to take up the cross daily. *J. W. A.*

But David has learned a better lore. Though far from "the holy mountain," there still dwells in his heart the blessings wherewith the priests of Jehovah had there blessed His people. "Jehovah make His face shine upon thee, . . . Jehovah lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." To that remembered blessing his heart now gives the echo in the prayer, "Jehovah, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us." *P.*—In the whole of the Old Testament Scriptures there is no other such echo of the second and third sentences of the Aaronic blessing. In David's mouth it is a petition of assured faith; for notwithstanding the hopelessness of the outlook at present, he is even now already at peace in his God. *D.*

Full of beauty and force is this thought of God lifting the sunlight of His face upon a soul otherwise in the gloom of darkness. David means to say that other men, *e.g.*, those treacherous enemies of his, may seek their good elsewhere and anywhere else they please; but for himself it is an all-sufficient joy if only he

may have peace in God and the sunlight of His favor. *C.*—They in their worldly-mindedness look for their happiness in the abundance of their earthly things. Hence when adversity threatens they begin to despond. David, on the other hand, has a source of joy deeper and more unfailing, because it flows from above. *P.*

The temper of a child of God is here beautifully described by the Psalmist. While others say, "Who will show us any good?" the language of his heart is, "Lord, lift Thou upon me the light of Thy countenance." He, too, seeks what is good; for the desire of happiness is common to all. But he knows where that good is to be found. He knows that the favor of God and the sense of His loving kindness are the only sources of true happiness. Here therefore he fixeth his choice. Here all his desires centre, and here he hath treasured up all the wishes of his heart. *R. Walker.*—When once the soul is rightly opened toward God, and draws its life from His Spirit, it does not need to go hunting the world for happiness—seeking it in nature, in science, in art, in money, in pleasure, in fashion, in changes, in crying, "Who will show me any good?" but it has its blessedness within, and is so full of the spirit of good that it sees good in everything, gets good from everything, and does good to all. This is the fountain within that never fails. *J. P. T.*

7. Thou hast put gladness in my heart. The very faculty of joy is the gift of the Holy Ghost. There is a canker in the heart of man which hinders happiness even when the materials are most abundant; and it is mournful to observe how little gladness is felt even when corn and wine most abound. In the midst of affluence still anxious, the munificence of the Creator cannot give contentment to worldlings and worldly professors; but while the green pastures re echo their grumblings, they may see their peevish faces reflected in those quiet waters to which their kind Shepherd has led them. It needs more than good and perfect gifts to awaken melody and praise: and unless the Spirit of God make it a thankful heart, the providence of God cannot make it a happy existence. *Hamilton.*

Reason is either obscured, or not obeyed, when the world is the object of our choice. Now what are these appearances of beauty and pleasure compared with a blessedness that is truly infinite? Earthly joy smiles in the countenance, flatters the fancy, touches the sense, but cannot fill the heart; but the favor of God satisfies the soul: "Thou hast put gladness

into my heart, more than when their corn and wine increased." Carnal joy, in its highest elevation, in the time of the harvest and vintage, is incomparably less than spiritual joy, that springs from the light of God's countenance. The world cannot fill the narrow capacity of our senses, but Divine joys exceed our most enlarged comprehensive faculties: "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing; but the peace of God passes all understanding." The things of the world are of a limited goodness; wisdom is not strength, nor learning riches, nor beauty fruitfulness; but God is a *universal good*, in whom are all attractions to raise and satisfy our desires. If men did consider, they would distinguish and despise, in comparison, all that is named felicity here, with the favor of God. *Bates.*

Though the heart once gone from God turns continually further away from Him, and moves not toward Him till it be renewed, yet, even in that wandering, it retains that natural relation to God, as its centre, that it hath no true rest elsewhere, nor can by any means find it. It is made for Him, and is therefore still restless till it meet with Him. *Leighton.*—So surely is it the infinite itself that attracts and charms us, that its highest manifestations do not satisfy us until we have referred them to their immortal source. The heart is insatiable, because it aspires after the Infinite. *Cousin.*—All lower natures find their highest good in semblances and seekings of that which is higher and better. All things strive to ascend, and ascend in their striving. And shall man alone stoop? Shall his pursuits and desires, the *reflections* of his inward life, be like the reflected image of a tree on the edge of a pool, that grows downward, and seeks a mock heaven in the unstable element beneath it? No! it must be a higher good to make you happy. *Coleridge.*

The true disciples of Christ are such as feel their spiritual wants—such as thirst for what they have tasted indeed, but merely tasted; they have tasted the streams, and they long to drink at the fountain; they are always pressing on through all difficulties and trials to their heavenly home; they are often ready to sink, often crying out, "Hold Thou me up;" they have to fight against a combination of powers, they want aid for their weakness; and pray with all prayer as the grand weapon of their warfare. Others may be rejoicing in their corn and wine, but the good things of this life will not satisfy *their* spiritualized desires; and with groanings that cannot be uttered the Spirit is often breathing in their hearts the desire,

"Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us!" *R. Hall.*

8. It was probably about the time of the Feast of Tabernacles. The grain harvest and the vintage were over. A rich harvest of corn and new wine had been gathered in. In these rich stores, which were at their disposal, the rebel troops of Absalom had a reserve of the greatest importance. But what David has in his heart is a better treasure than what they have in their barns and cellars. So he lays himself down to sleep serenely and peacefully. D.—Nothing could better express the sweet and perfect repose of faith than this. No matter for the danger to my throne or the peril to my life; my soul shall still rest in God, my Refuge—rest so completely that I shall lay me down and sleep in peace, for with God for my Helper, and all the universe besides against me, I shall dwell in safety. God alone, God with no other refuge or friend, is simply sufficient to ensure my salvation. And this experience is for me, let each reader say, as truly as for David. It stands here of set Divine purpose for the people of God in every age to read and to sing; to meditate upon and to transfer to their own case and appropriate each to his own soul in the midst of whatever trials, persecutions, dangers. The heart that is consciously upright before God, honestly and humbly seeking His favor above all things else, may trust in His protection and in His love forever. C.

Many a believer lies down, but it is not to sleep. Perhaps he feels safe enough so far as his body is concerned, but cares and anxieties invade the privacy of his chamber; they come to try his faith and trust. There is a trial in stillness; and oftentimes the still chamber makes a larger demand upon loving trust than the battle-field. O that we could trust God more and more with personal things! O that He were the God of our chamber, as well as of our temples and houses! O that we could bring Him more and more into the minutiae of daily life! *P. B. Power.*

Deep indeed and mysterious, far beyond what we can understand, are our own ordinary sleeping and waking; we know not how it is that the soothing quietness which we call sleep steals over the soul and body, nor how the two wake together and begin to act as before. Our sleeping and our waking are beyond our own knowledge and our own power; God keep both in His own hand. *Keble.*—They slumber sweetly whom faith rocks to sleep. No pillow so soft as a promise; no coverlet so warm as an assured interest in Christ. O Lord,

give us this calm repose on Thee, that like David we may lie down in peace, and sleep each night while we live ; and joyfully may we lie down in the appointed season, to sleep in death, to rest in God ! S.

In how many ways and how sweetly is the nature of faith expressed in this and the preceding Psalm ; he finds his righteousness, his excellency, his joy, his peace, his satisfaction in God ! D.

Life is worth living ; from the beginning to the end it is full of opportunities, full of interests, full of indications of duty ; full of growing, expanding experiences of the love of God and of the happiness of serving Him. As we grow up we learn enough of the shame of holowness ; short experience proves the vanity of false friendships. 'The very experience of unreality in other people teaches you to know

what you have to do, and do it ; to know your own measure, and act up to it ; to live believing in truth and in God's moral government, shirking nothing, blinking nothing, shamming nothing, pretending to nothing that is not your own. *Bishop of Chester.*

Count the knowledge of God and the experience of His sunny favor as more than all other treasures of wisdom or delights of love or lower things. Endeavor to keep vivid the consciousness of that face as looking always in on you, like the solemn frescoes of the Christ which Angelico painted on the walls of his convent cells, that each poor brother might feel the Master ever with him. Make Him your companion, and then, though you may feel the awe of the thought, "Thou hast set our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance," you will find a joy deeper than the awe, and learn the blessedness of those, sinful though they may be, who walk in the full brightness of that face. A. M.

PSALM V.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN ; WITH THE NEHILOTH. A PSALM OF DAVID.

- 1 GIVE ear to my words, O LORD,
Consider my meditation.
- 2 Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King,
and my God :
For unto thee do I pray.
- 3 O LORD, in the morning shalt thou hear my
voice ;
In the morning will I order *my prayer* unto
thee, and will keep watch.
- 4 For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in
wickedness :
Evil shall not sojourn with thee.
- 5 The arrogant shall not stand in thy sight :
Thou hatest all workers of iniquity.
- 6 Thou shalt destroy them that speak lies :
The LORD abhorreth the bloodthirsty and
deceitful man.
- 7 But as for me, in the multitude of thy
lovingkindness will I come into thy
house :
In thy fear will I worship toward thy holy
temple.

- 8 Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness be-
cause of mine enemies ;
Make thy way plain before my face.
- 9 For there is no faithfulness in their mouth ;
Their inward part is very wickedness :
Their throat is an open sepulchre ;
They flatter with their tongue.
- 10 Hold them guilty, O God ;
Let them fall by their own counsels :
Thrust them out in the multitude of their
transgressions ;
For they have rebelled against thee.
- 11 But let all those that put their trust in thee
rejoice,
Let them ever shout for joy, because thou
defendest them :
Let them also that love thy name be joyful
in thee.
- 12 For thou wilt bless the righteous :
O LORD, thou wilt compass him with favour
as with a shield.

LIKE Psalm 3, this is a morning prayer. But the circumstances of the singer are different. He is not now fleeing from open enemies ; but he is in peril from the machinations of

those who are secretly lying in wait for him (vs. 9, 10). He is not now an exile, but can still enter the house of the Lord and bow himself toward His holy dwelling-place (v. 7).

Throughout the Psalm there breathes a strong feeling that God is pledged, by His very character as a righteous God, to defend and bless the righteous. And David (if the Psalm be his) speaks as if in the full consciousness of his own uprightness. Yet the words are not the words of a self-righteous boaster; for, though no hypocrite or evil doer, he confesses that it is only in the lovingkindness of God that he can enter His holy temple. P.

1. *To my words, O Lord, Jehovah, give ear, perceive my thought.* Attend not only to my vocal and audible petitions, but to my unexpressed desires, to those "groanings which can not be uttered," but are no less significant to God than language. The second verb suggests the idea of attention, as well as that of simple apprehension. A.

1, 2. Observe the order and force of the words, "*my cry*," "*the voice of my prayer*;" and also, "*give ear*," "*consider*," "*hearken*." These expressions all evince the urgency and energy of David's feelings and petitions. First, we have, "*give ear*;" that is, hear me. But it is of little service for the words to be heard, unless the "*cry*," or the meditation, be *considered*. Luther.

Meditation before prayer matures our conceptions and quickens our desires. Our heart is an instrument that is easily put out of tune. And meditation is like the tuning of an instrument, and setting it for the harmony of prayer. What is the reason that in prayer there is such an easy discurrency in our thoughts—that our thoughts are like dust in the wind, carried to and fro; but only for want of meditation? The great reason why our prayers are ineffectual is, because we do not meditate before them. David expresseth prayer by meditation: "*Give ear to my words, O Lord; consider my meditation*." Gurnall.

2. Meditation and adoration are the necessary basis and element out of which prayer proceeds, and into which it returns. But they are not prayer. In prayer the soul appears before God, speaking to Him and giving itself to Him in humility, repentance, trust, love, and childlike petitions for grace and strength and all needful gifts. Wishes, cares, anxieties prepare the heart for prayer, but are not prayer until they are converted into direct address, supplication, and cry unto God. Saphir.—His prayer was a *cry*, it was *the voice of his cry*, which denotes fervency of affection, and importunity of expression; such effectual fervent prayers of a righteous man avail much, and do wonders. II.

Prayer is not a bondage to a heart full of holy feeling, and a head full of Divine knowledge; but it is the language which the promptings of the thoughts within us send rushing to our tongue, which it were the cruellest bondage of nature to stifle. Why, it were to muzzle reason, and knowledge, and piety, and purpose, and gratitude, and devotion—to doom to deep dungeons of silence the spirit which boundeth for the liberty of utterance and enterprise. Unspeakable pain would you cause were ye to deprive the religious man of prayer, which is the utterance of strong desire, and purpose, and feeling unto his Maker. Irving.

Prayer is intercourse; an act of trust, of hope, of love, all prompting to *interchange* between the soul and an Infinite, Spiritual, Invisible Friend. We all need prayer, if for no other purpose, for this which we so aptly call *communion* with God. We need friendly converse with Him whom our souls love. "He alone is a thousand companions; He alone is a world of friends. That man never knew what it was to be familiar with God, who complains of the want of friends while God is with him." But who can originate such conceptions of God, as are necessary to the enjoyment of His friendship in prayer, without *time* for thought, for self-collection, for concentration of soul? Momentary devotion, if genuine, must presuppose the *habit* of studious prayer. Phelps.

My King, my God. The most commanding encouraging principle of prayer, and the most powerful prevailing plea in prayer, is, to look upon Him as *our* King and *our* God, whom we lie under peculiar obligations to, and whom we have peculiar expectations from. H.—These little pronouns—*my* king, *my* God, are the very pith and marrow of the plea. Here is an argument why God should answer prayer; because He is *our* king and *our* God. He is ours by covenant, ours by promise, ours by oath, ours by blood. S.

3. *O Lord, Jehovah, (in) the morning Thou shalt hear my voice.* This is not so much a request to be heard as a resolution to persist in prayer. The reference may be either to stated hours of prayer or to early devotion as a proof of earnestness and faith. (*In) the morning I will set (my prayer) in order, to (or for) Thee.* There is here a beautiful allusion to the Mosaic ritual, which is unavoidably lost in a translation. The Hebrew verb is the technical term used in the Old Testament to signify the act of arranging the wood upon the altar and the shewbread on the table. It would therefore necessarily suggest the idea of prayer as an

oblation, here described as a kind of morning sacrifice to God. *And I will look out*, or watch for an answer to my prayers. The image presented is that of one looking from a wall or tower in anxious expectation of approaching succor. A similar use of the same verb occurs in Hab. 2 : 1 and Micah 7 : 7. True faith is not contented with the act of supplication, but displays itself in eager expectation of an answer. A.

Keep watch. We are to *watch* and pray ; to watch *unto* prayer—with reference to prayer ; to watch *before* prayer, that our prayer may be rightly directed or set in order ; to watch *during* prayer, against “unmannerly distractions ;” to watch *after* prayer, to see what becomes of our prayers. V.—Faith hath a supporting act after prayer ; it supports the soul to expect a gracious answer : “ *I will direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up,*” or I will look ; for what, but for a return ? An unbelieving heart shoots at random, and never minds where his arrow lights, or what comes of his praying ; but faith fills the soul with expectation. It gives such a being and existence to the mercy prayed for in the Christian’s soul before any likelihood of it appears to sense and reason, that the Christian can silence all his troubled thoughts with the expectation of its coming. For want of looking up many a prayer is lost. If you do not believe, why do you pray ? And if you believe, why do you not expect ? By praying you seem to depend on God ; by not expecting, you again renounce your confidence. O Christian, stand to your prayer in a holy expectation of what you have begged upon the credit of the promise. *Gurnall*.

The Hebrews sometimes speak of doing things “in the morning,” meaning by it rather *earnestly* than *early*. Perhaps both ideas are involved here—the latter more surely. The first thing when the day opens and my refreshed powers turn anew to my life-work, I will lift up my voice gratefully to God my preserver, imploringly to God my benefactor. What can be more fitting ? Why not begin each day in communion with God ? C.—Better to go from the throne of grace into the business of life, than to delay approaching it till worldly concerns have intruded on our minds. Wisest to seek and serve our best Friend first. May we not justly charge most of our sins and failings, and the breaking forth of our unholy tempers, to the neglect of this duty ? How ought we to begin each day with seeking the power of the Spirit, to enable us to mortify sin and live unto God ! W. *Mason*.

A battle is each morning fought in every Christian’s closet. The morning is the key of the position. The season of morning prayer is, so to speak, the citadel, the critical point of each successive day. If he wins those morning minutes the devil knows that he has won that day ; and if he wins them a few successive mornings he counts on winning you altogether, and hopes by and by to see you neglecting prayer entirely. The enemy of souls well knows how important that morning devotion is, and he spares no pains to frustrate and defeat it. Doubtless it is hard work ; but let us risk or endure everything rather than be driven out of that morning prayer. A few moments spent in communion with God at each opening day—a visit to the throne of grace—will freshen our spirits and revive their sacred emotions. It will fortify our hearts against the griefs and crosses which may surprise us, and, in case of threatened dangers, or seducing evils, it will secure presence of mind and a present help in a present Saviour. *Hamilton*.

We are the fittest for prayer, when we are in the most fresh, and lively, and composed frame, got clear of the slumbers of the night, revived by them, and not yet filled with the business of the day. We have then most need of prayer, considering the dangers and temptations of the day to which we are exposed, and against which we are concerned, by faith and prayer, to fetch in fresh supplies of grace. II.—That silent morning prayer, how does it deepen our thankfulness for all the good daily bestowed ! How does it strengthen our patience under the burden each day brings ! How does it hallow our activity in the task which day demands ! How does it keep alive our watchfulness against the temptation each day renews ! How does it feed our hope of the eternity each day brings nearer ! Sufficient unto each day is the evil thereof ; but the sorrows of a day confided to God’s ear, work together for good ; and the morning sacrifice offered to Him in truth, hours thereafter still spreads its sweet-smelling savor through the priest’s house and heart. *Van O*.

In the morning, when you awake, accustom yourself to think first upon God, or something in order to His service ; and at night also let Him close thine eyes ; and let your sleep be necessary and healthful, not idle and expensive of time, beyond the needs and conveniences of nature ; and sometimes be curious to see the preparation which the sun makes when he is coming forth from his chambers of the east. Let all the intervals or void spaces of time be employed in prayers, reading, meditating,

works of charity, friendliness, and means of spiritual and corporal health ; ever remembering so to work in our callings as not to neglect the work of our calling. *Jeremy Taylor.*

He that *muses* toward God prays. If you can conceive of a child in the presence of a parent most beloved that speaks, that is silent, that speaks again, that is again silent ; the intercourse of that child with the parent is a fit symbol of true prayer. *Prayer is the soul of a man moving in the presence of God*, for the purpose of communicating its joy, or sorrow, or fear, or hope, or any other conscious experience that it may have, to the bosom of a parent. *H. W. Beecher.*

4. Here, as elsewhere, the Psalmist identifies his cause with God's, and anticipates the downfall of his enemies because they are sinners and therefore odious in God's sight. *For not a God delighting in wickedness (art) Thou*, as might appear to be the case if these should go unpunished. It is necessary, therefore, for the Divine honor, that they should not go unpunished. *Not with Thee*, as Thy guest or friend, *shall evil, or the bad (man), dwell*. It is still implied that the impunity of sinners would appear as if God harbored and abetted them, and therefore must be inconsistent with His honor as a holy God.

7. The verse is an engagement to acknowledge God's delivering mercy in the customary manner. As if he had said : while my enemies perish by the hand of God, I shall be brought by His mercy to give thanks for my deliverance at His sanctuary. A.

In the multitude of Thy lovingkindness. The Psalmist has access to God not only because he is of a different *character* from those mentioned in the previous verses, but because the King of kings, of His grace and goodness, permits him to draw near. Therefore also he adds "in Thy fear." We see here the mingled feeling of confidence and liberty of access with solemn awe and deep humility which befits every true worshipper. P.—It is in the *multitude* of God's mercy (the inexhaustible treasures of mercy that are in God, and the innumerable proofs and instances of it which we receive from Him) that David confides, and not in any merit or righteousness of his own, in his approaches to God. The mercy of God should ever be the foundation both of our hopes, and of our joy, in everything wherein we have to do with Him. H.

In Thy fear will I worship. Such will the print on the wax be as the sculpture is on the seal ; if the fear of God be deeply en-

graven on thy heart, there is no doubt but it will make a suitable impression on the duty thou performest. *Gurnall.*—Seeing it is much in the capacity and frame of thy heart how much thou shalt enjoy of God in His worship, be sure that all the room thou hast be empty ; and seek Him here with all thy soul. Say to all thy worldly business and thoughts, as Christ to His disciples, "Sit you here, while I go and pray yonder." *Baxter.*

8. **Mine enemies.** The word is, *my observers*, or as these scan my ways, every foot of them, that examine them as a verse or as a song of music ; if there be but a wrong measure in them they will not let it slip, but will be sure to mark it. And if the enemies of the godly wait for their halting, shall not they scan their own paths themselves that they may not halt ? and examine them to order them, as the wicked do to censure them ; still depending wholly upon the Spirit of God as their guide, *to lead them into all truth*, and to teach them how *to order their conversation aright*, that it may be all of a piece, holy and blameless, and still like itself ? L.—"Make Thy way," not *my way*, "straight before my face." When we have learned to give up our own way, and long to walk in God's way, it is a happy sign of grace ; and it is no small mercy to see the way of God with clear vision straight before our face. S.

9. The figure graphically portrays the filthy conversation of the wicked. Nothing can be more abominable to the senses than an open sepulchre, with its tainted exhalations. What proceeds out of their mouth is infected and putrid ; and as the exhalation from a sepulchre proves the corruption within, so it is with the corrupt conversation of sinners. *R. Haldane.*—If we could seal in silence the mouth of the wicked it would be like a sepulchre shut up, and would not produce much mischief. But "their throat is an *open* sepulchre," consequently all the wickedness of their heart exhales and comes forth. S.

10. The imperative and future forms, in this verse, both express the certainty of the event, with an implication of approving acquiescence. Such expressions, in the Psalms, have never really excited or encouraged a spirit of revenge in any reader, and are no more fitted to have that effect than the act of a judge who condemns a criminal to death or of the officer who executes the sentence. The objections urged against such passages are not natural, but spring from over-refinement and a false view of the Psalms as expressions of mere personal feeling. A.—This is not malicious

imprecation : it is not David moved selfishly to curse his enemies considered as only his own, but it is David the rightful sovereign of the nation, conscious of acting under the great God both of Israel and of all the nations of the earth, jealous for the honor of his Master, accounting the wickedness of those traitors more as rebellion against God than as treason against his own earthly throne ; identifying himself with God and invoking His interposition for the honor of His name and the vindication of His justice. And can any complaint lie against the spirit of these words ? *Ought* not the all-perfect God to hold such sinners guilty and treat them accordingly ? And ought not every soul that loves God, and justice, and the well-being of the universe to stand with God in this ? approving His judgments upon the wicked, sympathizing with His abhorrence of all sin and wrong, and rejoicing that he will not let the incorrigibly wicked escape their deserved doom ? C.—All the difficult passages in this book, where curses seem to be called for on the head of the ungodly, are no more than a carrying out of Deut. 27 : 15–26, “ Let all the people say, Amen,” and an entering into the Lord’s holy abhorrence of sin, and delight in acts of justice expressed in the “ Amen, hallelujah,” of Rev. 19 : 3. *A. A. Bonar.*

11. When traitors against God and man meet their doom, all men loyal to God and His cause may fitly rejoice. Joy that God reigns is always legitimate—always glorious. It is sad that men and devils *will be wicked* ; it is not sad that, being wicked past all cure and even all effective restraint in a free world, they should eat of the fruit of their own doings, and that God makes their example of woe and ruin a glorious power toward holiness and blessedness in His universe. Thus much in exposition of what are so often called the imprecatory and vindictive Psalms it is fit should be said, and is of the utmost consequence that all men should understand. C.

Joyful in Thee. Joy is not a fancy, or bred of conceit ; but is rational, and ariseth from the feeling of some good—viz., the sense of God’s love and favor. Joy is so real a thing that it makes a sudden change in a person ; it turns mourning into melody. As in the spring-time, when the sun comes to our horizon, so

when the Sun of Righteousness ariseth on the soul it makes a sudden alteration, and the soul is infinitely rejoiced with the golden beams of God’s love. *Watson.*—Confiding, disinterested love finds in all things something to rejoice in. In forgiving it recovers what was lost ; in enduring it conquers ; in expending it increases ; in admiring it takes possession. Harmony, truth, beauty, excellence become ours through the loving perception of them, and love sharpens the mind’s sight for them, or reveals them where without loving we should not see them. The seeing of what is lovely or excellent is, for the moment at least, a possession of these qualities, and seeing them with approbation and desire prolongs their possession. Consciousness tells us so much as true. *H. Hooker.*

12. With favor as with a shield. Being a movable piece of armor, the skilful soldier might turn it this way or that way, to catch the blow or arrow from lighting on any part they were directed to. And this indeed doth excellently well set forth the universal use that faith is of to the Christian. It defends the whole man : every part of the Christian by it is preserved. . . . The shield doth not only defend the whole body, but it is a defence to the soldier’s armor also ; it keeps the arrow from the helmet as well as head, from the breast and breastplate also. Thus faith, it is armor upon armor, a grace that preserves all the other graces. *Gurnall.*

This Psalm is a great lesson on prayer ; pointing us to its variety as a weapon adapted for all emergencies, and teaching us how to wield it most effectively. We are taught to carry into it the faith which appropriates God as our own. We are warned against the profanation by carelessness or haste of that most solemn of acts—communion with our Creator. We are bidden to send forth our prayers considerately, and to look confidently for tidings from them. The Psalm drives all slavish fear from our prayers even while it bases our confidence wholly upon the undeserved compassion of our Father in Heaven ; and it commends to us intercourse with God as no mere task or duty, but as the dearest employment and the sweetest joy of our lives. V.

PSALM VI.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN ; ON STRINGED INSTRUMENTS, SET TO THE SHEMINITH. A PSALM OF DAVID.

- 1 O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger,
Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.
- 2 Have mercy upon me, O LORD ; for I am
withered away :
O LORD, heal me ; for my bones are vexed.
- 3 My soul also is sore vexed :
And thou, O LORD, how long ?
- 4 Return, O LORD, deliver my soul :
Save me for thy lovingkindness' sake.
- 5 For in death there is no remembrance of
thee :
In Sheol who shall give thee thanks ?
- 6 I am weary with my groaning ;

- Every night make I my bed to swim ;
I water my couch with my tears.
- 7 Mine eye wasteth away because of grief ;
It waxeth old because of all mine adversaries.
- 8 Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity ;
For the LORD hath heard the voice of my
weeping.
- 9 The LORD hath heard my supplication ;
The LORD will receive my prayer.
- 10 All mine enemies shall be ashamed and sore
vexed :
They shall turn back, they shall be ashamed
suddenly.

SINCE the time of Origen, seven of the Psalms have borne the name of *Penitential*—namely, 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143. “The historical books,” says Perowne, “need a rich store of knowledge before they can be a modern book of life ; but the Psalms are the records of individual experience. Personal religion is the same in all ages. The deeps of our humanity remain unruffled by the storms of ages which change the surface.” Sin and penitence, which are common to all times and to all men, give these productions a permanent and universal interest. These Psalms are not all expressions of contrition for personal sin ; nevertheless, they all recognize sin as the source of corruption and trouble. We may find in them every element of a true repentance according to the Gospel standard. V.—This is the first of the seven Penitential Psalms. In great peril from his enemies, and in great anguish of heart, David cries to God for mercy. In the malice of his enemies he sees the rod of God’s chastisement ; and therefore he makes his prayer to God for deliverance. The struggle has lasted so long, the grief is so bitter, that his health has given way, and he has been brought to the gates of the grave. But, even while thus pouring out the anguish of his spirit, light and peace visit him, and he breaks forth into the joy of thanksgiving. That this is a Psalm of David, there is no reason to question, although there is nothing in it to guide us to any peculiar circumstances of his life. P.’

Title. For the Chief Musician (to be sung), with stringed instruments upon the eighth. This

last word corresponds exactly to our *octave* ; but its precise application in the ancient music we have now no means of ascertaining. We probably lose little by our incapacity to understand these technical expressions, while at the same time their very obscurity may serve to confirm our faith in their antiquity and genuineness, as parts of the original composition. This Psalm, like the three which immediately precede it, describes itself as *a Psalm of (or by) David*, belonging *to David*, as its author. The correctness of this statement there is as little reason to dispute in this as in either of the other cases. A.

1–7. These verses speak the language of a heart truly humbled under humbling providences, of a broken and contrite spirit under great afflictions, sent on purpose to awaken conscience, and mortify corruption. Those heap up wrath who cry not when God binds them ; but those are getting ready for mercy who under God’s rebukes sow in tears, as David does here. H.—David uses the name Jehovah exclusively in this Psalm. He has no hope but in the grace of which that name is a pledge. Rebuke, anger, chasten, displeasure—each word involves an acknowledgment of deep guilt. David feels that his sin has found him out. Cook.

1. This is not a prayer for the mitigation of the punishment, but for its removal, as appears from the answer in vs. 8–10. Such a petition, while it indicates a strong faith, at the same time recognizes the connection between suffering and sin. In the very act of asking for re-

lief the Psalmist owns that he is justly punished. This may serve to teach us how far the confident tone of the preceding Psalms is from betraying a self-righteous spirit, or excluding the consciousness of personal unworthiness and ill-desert. The boldness there displayed is not that of self-reliance, but of faith.

2. *Heal me, O Jehovah, for shaken, agitated with distress, are my bones*, here mentioned as the strength and framework of the body. The physical effect here ascribed to moral causes is entirely natural and confirmed by all experience. A.

2, 3. *The Feeling of the Burden and Sorrow of Sin.* Thus the bones and the soul are sore vexed. The bones wax old : a heavy hand is upon him : his moisture is dried up (32 : 3, 4). God's arrows stick fast in him ; there is no soundness in his flesh : his heart panteth, his strength faileth ; his loins are filled with a loathsome disease (38 : 2-10). He has eaten ashes like bread, and mingled his drink with weeping (102 : 9, 10). His sin is ever before him (51 : 3). V.

3. The Psalmist himself guards against the error of supposing that his worst distresses were corporeal. *And my soul*, as well as my body, or more than my body, which merely sympathizes with it, *is greatly agitated*, terror-stricken, the same word that was applied to the bones in the preceding verse. The description of his suffering is then interrupted by another apostrophe to God. *And Thou, O Lord, Jehovah, until when, how long ?* The sentence is left to be completed by the reader : how long wilt Thou leave me thus to suffer ? how long before Thou wilt appear for my deliverance ? This question, in its Latin form, *Domine quousque*, was Calvin's favorite ejaculation in his times of suffering, and especially of painful sickness. A.—Our deprecatory prayers appoint not God His ways, nor His times ; but as our postulatory prayers are, they also are submitted to the will of God, and have all in them that ingredient, that herb of grace, which Christ put into His own prayer, that *yet not My will, but Thy will be fulfilled* ; and they have that ingredient which Christ put into our prayer, *Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.* Donne.

3. **Return.** It seems to the sufferer as if God had been absent during his affliction. And there is no hope for him but in God. Therefore the repeated prayer, *Do Thou be gracious unto me :—how long wilt Thou be absent ? Return Thou, etc.* And observe, not only “be gracious, *for I languish,*” but “deliver me *for Thy lovingkindness' sake.*” Any man may

use the first argument : only one who has tasted that the Lord is gracious can use the last. P.

It is an unspeakable privilege that we have a God to go to in our afflictions, and it is our duty to go to Him and thus to wrestle with Him, and we shall not *seek* in vain. He pleads his own misery, and that his misery had continued long : “I am weak, I am troubled, sore troubled ; O Lord, how long shall I be so ?” He pleads God's mercy ; thence we take some of our best encouragements in prayer : *Save me, for Thy mercies' sake.* He pleads God's glory (v. 5) : “*For in death there is no remembrance of Thee.*” Even the death of the body puts an end to our opportunity and capacity of glorifying God in this world, and serving the interests of His kingdom among men, by opposing the powers of darkness, and bringing many on this earth to know God and devote themselves to Him. To depart and be with Christ is most happy for the saints themselves ; but for them to abide in the flesh is more profitable for the Church. This David had an eye to when he pleaded this, *In the grave, who shall give Thee thanks ?* And this Christ had an eye to when He said, *I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world.* H.

8. *Judge me, oh Lord, Jehovah !* If it be true that God will judge the world, redress all wrong, and punish all iniquity, let Him begin with me. Let me share now in the justice which is to be universally administered. *Judge me, oh Lord, according to my right, and my completeness, or perfection, over me, i.e.,* according to my innocence which covers and protects me. All such expressions must be qualified and explained by the confession of unworthiness in Psalm 6 and elsewhere, which sufficiently demonstrates that the Psalmist here makes no claim to absolute perfection and innocence, nor to any whatever that is independent of God's sovereign mercy. A.

Mine integrity that is in me. Notice how the Scriptures speak of integrity, how manifold and bold the forms in which they commend it, and how freely the good men of the Scripture times testify their consciousness of it in their appeals to God. And lest we should imagine that the integrity is only a crude and partial conception, belonging to the piety of the Old Testament, the Christian disciples of the New Testament are testifying also in a hundred ways to the integrity, before God and man, in which they consciously live. As an integer is a whole, in distinction from a fraction, which is only a part, so a man of integrity is a man whose aim in the right is a whole aim ;

in distinction from one whose aim is divided, partial, or unstable. It is such a state of right intention as allows the man to be consciously right-minded, and to firmly rest in the singleness of his purpose. There is a kind of integrity which goes far beyond the mere integrity of trade, and which is the only real integrity. This higher and only real integrity is the root of all true character, and must be the condition somehow of Christian character itself. There is no redeeming efficacy in right intent; taken by itself, it would never vanquish the inward state of evil at all. And yet it is just that by which all evil will be vanquished under Christ and by grace, because it puts the soul in such a state as makes the great power of Christ, co-working with it, effectual. Integrity is presupposed in all true faith, and enters in that manner into all true Gospel character. *Bushnell.*

The believer's purpose to glorify God and enjoy Him forever is an habitual, constant purpose. Whatever winds may drive him from the thing he purposes, yet no wind can drive him from his purpose when once it is wrought of God in his heart. He may be drawn to sin, but he can never be drawn to a purpose of living in sin; nay, if some strong corruptions prevail against him and lead him captive, yet he can confidently appeal to Heaven it was against his purpose, and against his prayers, and against his tears, and against his hope, that such an iniquity prevailed against him. *Ers-kine.*—An habitual intending God as our end, depending on His support, and subjection to His government, will carry on the soul in a sincere and constant course of godliness, though the actual most observed thoughts of the soul be fewer in number about God than about the means that lead unto Him, and the occurrences in our way. A man in a journey may be much of the way taken up with thoughts and discourse of other things, and yet he doth truly intend his journey's end in every step of the way, and use every step as a means to that end. And so it is with a true Christian in the work of God and the way to heaven. *Baxter.*

Consider what it is that gives such peace and loftiness of bearing to the life of a truly righteous man. What an atmosphere of serenity does it create for him that he is living in a conscience void of offence! And when great storms of trouble drive their clouds about him, when he is assailed by enemies and detractors, persecuted for his opinions, broken down by adversities, thrown out of confidence and respect even, as will sometimes happen, by false con-

structions of his conduct and malignant conspiracies against his character, still his soul abides in peace, because he justifies himself and has the witness that he pleases God. These clouds that seem to be about him do still not shut him in. He sits above with his God, and they all sail under! Such a man is very strong! There is no power below the stars that can shake him! He is able still and always to make his great appeal and say—"Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to the integrity that is in me." Who can understand like him the meaning of that word—"And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever." Here, too, is the ground of all failures, and all highest successes in religion, or the Christian life. Only to be an honest man, in this highest and genuinely Christian sense, signifies a great deal more than most of us ever conceive. Here is the spot where you are to make your revision, find what your intent is, whether it is honest, and whole, and clean, warped by no ambiguities, divided and stolen away by no idols. Here the Achan will be hid if anywhere. Make sure of his dislodgment, and the way is clear. Every man who comes into a state of right intent, or is set to be a real integer in the right, will forthwith also be a Christian. *Bushnell.*

9. It is the cessation of evil with which the Psalmist has now to do—oh, that it would come to an end! His prayer is therefore not directed against the persons as such, but against the evil that is in them. This Psalm is the key to all the Psalms that contain prayers against foes. To the longed-for cessation of evil there corresponds the longed-for securing and confirming of the righteous, whom evil endangers and whose stability it tends to undermine.

God trieth the hearts and the reins.

The reins are the seat of the emotions, just as the heart is the seat of the thoughts and affections. Reins and heart lie naked before God.

10. God is the righteous One, and in virtue of His knowledge of the heart He is perfectly able to prove Himself righteous in anger as well as righteous in grace, according to the requirements of each several case. Therefore David can confidently add: *God beareth my shield.* D.—*He saves the upright in heart,* saves them with an everlasting salvation, and therefore will preserve them to His heavenly kingdom; He saves them out of their present troubles as far as is good for them; their integrity and uprightness will preserve them. The upright in heart are safe, and ought to

think themselves so, under the Divine protection. *God is a righteous Judge*, who not only doeth righteousness Himself, but will take care that righteousness be done by the children of men, and will avenge and punish all unrighteousness. H.

11. Ainsworth translates it, “*God is a just judge; and God angrily threateneth every day.*” With this corresponds the reading of Coverdale’s Bible, “*God is a righteous judge, and God is ever threatening.*” In King Edward’s Bible, of 1549, the reading is the same. *J. Morison.*—God’s judgment upon the case of the righteous is thought of here as a vindication of His cause against the oppression of the wicked. So considered, David says, “*God will avenge the righteous man, intensely indignant all the time,*” *i.e.*, against his oppressor. So the next words imply, “*If he turn not*”—which can possibly mean none other than this wicked persecutor of the good. This turning must be a reversal of his course—real repentance of this sin. C.

The object of this anger, although not expressed, is obvious, and is even rendered more conspicuous by this omission. As if he had said: “*God, who does justice to the righteous, has likewise objects for His indignation.*” A.—No other word will adequately represent God’s feeling, but the human word *anger*. If we explain away such words, we lose the distinction between right and wrong: we lose belief in God; for you will end in believing there is no God at all, if you begin with explaining away His feelings. F. W. R.—We have no insensible and stolid God to deal with; He can be angry, nay, He is angry to-day and every day with ungodly and impenitent sinners. The best day that ever dawns on a sinner brings a curse with it. Sinners may have many feast days, but no safe days. S.

12. *If he*, the sinner with whom God is angry, *will not turn, i.e.*, turn back from his impious and rebellious undertakings, *His sword He will whet, i.e.*, with a natural though sudden change of subject, God will whet His sword, often referred to as an instrument of vengeance. *His bow he has trodden on*, alluding to the ancient mode of bending the large and heavy bows used in battle, *and made it ready*. The bow and the sword were the most common weapons used in ancient warfare. The past tense of these verbs implies that the instruments of vengeance are prepared already, and not merely viewed as something future. A.—The whetting of the sword is but to give a keener edge that it may cut the deeper. God

is silent as long as the sinner will let Him; but when the sword is whet, it is to cut; and when the bow is bent, it is to kill; and woe be to that man who is the butt. *W. Secker.*

13. *And at him* (the wicked enemy) *He has aimed, or directed, the instruments of death, His deadly weapons.* This is still another step in advance. The weapons are not only ready for him, but aimed at him. *His arrows to (be) burning He will make, i.e.*, He will make His arrows burning arrows, in allusion to the ancient military custom of shooting ignited darts or arrows into besieged towns, for the purpose of setting them on fire, as well as that of personal injury. The figurative terms in these two verses all express the certainty and promptness of the Divine judgments on incorrigible sinners. For even these denunciations are not absolute, but suspended on the enemy’s repentance or persistency in evil. That significant phrase, *if he will not turn*, may be tacitly supplied as *qualifying every threatening in the book*, however strong and unconditional in its expressions. A.

Illyricus hath a story which may well be a commentary upon this text in both the parts of it. One Felix, Earl of Wartenberg, one of the captains of the Emperor Charles V., swore in the presence of divers at supper that before he died he would ride up to the spurs in the blood of the Lutherans. Here was one that burned in malice, but behold how God works His arrows against him; that very night the hand of God so struck him that he was strangled and choked in his own blood; so he rode not, but bathed himself, not up to the spurs, but up to the throat; not in the blood of the Lutherans, but in his own blood, before he died. *Jeremiah Burroughs.*

11-13. With what magnificent boldness he paints God the Judge arraying Himself in His armor of destruction! Surely there is nothing grander in any poetry than this tremendous image, smitten out with so few strokes of the chisel, and as true as it is grand. The representation applies to the facts of life, of which, as directed by a present Providence and not of any future retribution, David is here thinking. Among these facts is chastisement falling upon obstinate antagonism to God. Modern ways of thinking shrink from such representations; but the whole history of the world teems with confirmation of their truth—only what David calls the flaming arrows of God, men call “the natural consequences of evil.” The later revelation of God in Christ brings into greater prominence the disciplinary character of all

punishment here, but bates no jot of the intensity with which the earlier revelation grasped the truth of God as a righteous Judge in eternal opposition to, and aversion from, evil. A. M.

Even death and judgment, awful as they are, derive all their terrors from a greater fear: they are only expressions of the wrath of God. This wrath it is which is enkindled by our sin, and which like an infinite fire inflames the rage of Tophet. When we trace up our fears to their principle, we find them fixing on one august but dread object—the Lord God Almighty, considered as a God of infinite holiness and infinite justice. It is not more clearly revealed that there is a God, or that there is a Christ, than that the justice of Jehovah goes forth toward the destruction of the guilty. J. W. A. —While God is preparing His instruments of death, He gives the sinners timely warning of their danger, and space to repent and prevent it. He is slow to punish, and *long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish*. The longer the destruction is delayed to give time for repentance, the sorer will it be, and the heavier will it fall, and lie forever, if that time be not so improved, while God is waiting; the sword is in the whetting, and the bow in the drawing. The destruction of impenitent sinners, though it come slowly, yet comes surely. Of all sinners, persecutors are set up as the fairest marks of Divine wrath; against them, more than any other, God has ordained His arrows. They set God at defiance, but cannot set themselves out of the reach of His judgments. H.

14-16. Not only the justice of God punishes, but the wickedness of the wicked effects his

own destruction. P.—The sinner is here described as taking a great deal of pains to ruin himself, more pains to damn his soul than if directed aright, would save it. H.—As if dictating a judicial sentence, he prophesies to the enemy of God what awaits him. Man brings forth what he has conceived, he reaps what he has sown. Under these figures the punishment that sin naturally and inevitably involves is frequently represented, first in this the primary passage, and then in Job 15:35; the act of sin, its guilt and punishment appear in general as notions that pass over into one another. David sees in the sin of his enemies their self-destruction. D.

With that solemn picture flaming before his inward eye, the Prophet-Psalmist turns to gaze on the evil-doer who has to bear the brunt of these weapons of light. Summoning us to look with him by a “Behold!” he tells his fate in an image of frequent occurrence in the Psalms of this period, and very natural in the lips of a man wandering in the desert among wild creatures and stumbling sometimes into the traps dug for them. A. M.

17. We conclude with the joyful contrast. In this all these Psalms are agreed; they all exhibit the blessedness of the righteous, and make its colors the more glowing by contrast with the miseries of the wicked. *Praise* is the occupation of the godly, their eternal work, and their present pleasure. *Singing* is the fitting embodiment for praise, and therefore do the saints make melody before the Lord Most High. The slandered one is now a singer; his harp was unstrung for a very little season, and now we leave him sweeping its harmonious chords in adoring praise. S.

PSALM VII.

SHIGGAION OF DAVID, WHICH HE SANG UNTO THE LORD, CONCERNING THE WORDS OF CUSH
A BENJAMITE.

1 O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust :
Save me from all them that pursue me, and
deliver me :
2 Lest he tear my soul like a lion,
Rending it in pieces, while there is none to
deliver.

3 O LORD my God, if I have done this ;
If there be iniquity in my hands ;

4 If I have rewarded evil unto him that was
at peace with me ;

(Yea, I have delivered him that without
cause was mine adversary :) [*if I have
spoiled him as an enemy without cause ;*]

5 Let the enemy pursue my soul, and over-
take it ;

Yea, let him tread my life down to the earth,
And lay my glory in the dust. [Selah]

- 6 Arise, O LORD, in thine anger,
Lift up thyself against the rage of mine adversaries :
And awake for me ; thou hast commanded judgment.
- 7 And let the congregation of the peoples compass thee about :
And over them return thou on high.
- 8 The LORD ministereth judgment to the peoples :
Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and to mine integrity that is in me.
- 9 Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but establish thou the righteous :
For the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.
- 10 My shield is with God,
Which saveth the upright in heart.

- 11 God is a righteous judge,
Yea, a God that hath indignation every day.
- 12 If a man turn not, he will whet his sword ;
He hath bent his bow, and made it ready.
- 13 He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death ;
He maketh his arrows fiery shafts.
- 14 Behold, he travaileth with iniquity ;
Yea, he hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood.
- 15 He hath made a pit, and digged it,
And is fallen into the ditch which he made.
- 16 His mischief shall return upon his own head,
And his violence shall come down upon his own pate.
- 17 I will give thanks unto the LORD according to his righteousness :
And will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High.

“SHALL not the Judge of all the earth do right?” might stand as the motto of this Psalm. In full reliance on God’s righteousness David appeals to Him to judge his cause. The righteous God cannot but save the righteous, and punish the wicked. This David believes to be the law of his moral government, and he applies it to his own case. His heart bears him witness that he has done no wrong to any man (vs. 3, 4), whereas his enemies have plotted unceasingly to take away his life. He therefore confidently anticipates his own deliverance and their overthrow (vs. 17, 18) as the manifestation of the righteous judgment of God.

According to the inscription, this Psalm was written by David, and was occasioned by the words of Cush, a Benjamite. There can be very little doubt that the inscription, in this instance, preserves an ancient tradition. It is accepted by the majority of critics, and the Psalm unquestionably bears every internal evidence of having been written by David. The solemn appeal to God’s righteous judgment, the deep consciousness of his own integrity, which was so fully admitted by Saul, are but the echo in the Psalm, only expressed in a lofty strain of poetry, of the same thought which is repeated with so much emphasis as he speaks to Saul on the hill-side : “Jehovah judge between me and thee, and Jehovah avenge me of thee ; but mine hand shall not be upon thee. . . . Jehovah therefore be Judge, and judge between me and thee, and see and plead my cause, and do me justice at thy hand.” We must look, then, to circumstances like

those recorded in the twenty-fourth and twenty-sixth chapters of the first book of Samuel, and to the reproaches of a Benjamite named Cush, a leading and unscrupulous partisan of Saul’s, as having given occasion to the Psalm. P.

1, 2. David rests his appeal to God for help on these grounds : that he is in peril and cannot live without help ; that he has made the Lord God his refuge ; that he had long before accepted Jehovah as his Friend and Helper, and therefore comes to Him now in his time of need. That he should speak of his enemies at one time as many and at other times as one need occasion no difficulty, since the one may be a chief—the leader of the rest. C.

3. With a quick turn he protests passionately his innocence, his soul surging with emotion, his words broken by the vehemence of his feelings, as he thinks how unjustly he has been assailed. Again, as in v. 1, “*my God,*” *If I have done this thing*, with which I am charged. P.

3-5. The passage, with all its lyrical abruptness and lofty imagery, is the expression of the very same thought which we find so prominent in his words to Saul concerning God’s judging between them and delivering David out of Saul’s hand. A. M.

4. *If I have repaid my friend*, one at peace with me, *evil, and spoiled*, plundered (*one*), *distressing me*, acting as my enemy, *without a cause*. This construction is moreover much more natural, and agrees better with the grammatical dependence of the second verb upon the first. A.—The more exact translation

would be, "If I have requited evil for good to one who was my friend, if I have even spoiled him as an enemy without provocation, then let my enemy pursue my soul and overtake and tread down my life to the ground," etc. C.—To do evil for good is human corruption; to do good for good is civil retribution; but to do good for evil is Christian perfection. Though this be not the grace of nature, yet it is the nature of grace. *W. Secker.*

6-8. The rapid utterance of feeling has here again somewhat broken the poet's words. Hitherto he has protested his innocence; now, in the full consciousness of that innocence, he comes before the very judgment-seat of God, and demands the fullest and most public vindication. Then he sees, as it were in a vision, the judgment set: "Thou hast commanded judgment." Next, that sentence may be pronounced with due solemnity, he calls upon God to gather the nations round Him, and to seat Himself upon His judgment-throne. Lastly, he prays God, as the Judge of all nations, to judge himself. P.—His field of vision is enlarged, and embraces not only the enemies that are in his immediate neighborhood, but also the world at large in its hostility to Jehovah and His anointed one. Here the language takes the highest and most majestic flight conceivable. D.

Each smaller act of God's judgment is connected with the final world-judgment, is a prophecy of it, is one in principle therewith; and He who at the last will be known as the universal Judge of all certainly cannot leave His servants' cause unredressed nor their cry unheard till then. The Psalmist is led by his own history to realize more intensely that truth of a Divine manifestation for judicial purposes to the whole world, and his prophetic lip paints its solemnities as the surest pledge of his own deliverance. He sees the gathered nations standing hushed before the Judge, and the Victor God at the close of the solemn act ascending up on high where He was before, above the heads of the mighty crowd (Psalm 68: 19). In the faith of this vision, and because God will judge the nations, he invokes for himself the anticipation of that final triumph of good over evil, and asks to be dealt with according to his righteousness. The righteous integrity which he calls God to vindicate is not general sinlessness nor inward conformity with the law of God, but his blamelessness in all his conduct to his gratuitous foe. A. M.

5. As a further reason for his rescue, he now urges that without it God will lose the honor,

and himself the happiness, of his praises and thanksgivings. *For there is not in death, or the state of the dead, Thy remembrance, any remembrance of Thee.* In *Sheol*, the grave, as a general receptacle, here parallel to *death*, and like it meaning the unseen world or state of the dead, *who will acknowledge, or give thanks, to Thee?* The Hebrew verb denotes that kind of praise called forth by the experience of goodness. This verse only proves that David in this emergency looks no further than the close of life as the appointed term of thanksgiving and praise. A.—*Sheol* is the name given to the subterranean land of the dead, whose gate is the grave, the yawning abyss, into which everything that is mortal descends. All the Psalmists know only of one single gathering-place of the dead in the depths of the earth, where they indeed live, but their life is only a *quasi* life. D.

Exactly parallel to this is Hezekiah's language (Isa. 38: 18), "For the grave cannot praise Thee; death cannot celebrate Thee. The living, the living, he shall praise Thee." The argument here employed is no doubt characteristic of the old dispensation. They who then feared and loved God, nevertheless walked in shadows, and their hope was not yet full of immortality. And further, the desire to continue in life is always connected with the desire to praise God. The Old Testament saint pleaded with God for life, in order that that life might be consecrated to His service. And it is very touching to see how, with the weakness of man's heart trembling at dissolution, there mingles the child-like confidence which fears not to advance the plea that God's glory is concerned in granting its request. P.

The Psalmist is not asserting the cessation of memory, gratitude, or any other conscious activity of soul as the consequence of death. This would cut very short the hope of the future, leave a very meagre argument for pleading with God to return, make the lot of the good and the bad very much alike, and be contrary to the doctrine of the Psalmist concerning the future state of the soul. M.—His prayer would be, Let me live; let me find mercy of Thee, so that I may go again before the great congregation in Thy house of praise and there render my thanksgivings for delivering mercy. Death would cut me off from this greatest joy of my heart. The same sentiment appears again in Psalm 30: 9, and 88: 10-12, and 115: 17, 18; also Isa. 38: 18. C.

6, 7. A further description of his distress. The heart can make *all* known to God.

Thoughts and feelings and acts that we should be ashamed to confess to our fellow-men, we fear not to confess to Him. P.—The feeling that he was suffering God's rebuke, smarting under God's correction, was at once a comfort and a grief to the Psalmist: a comfort when he remembered the loving wisdom that corrected him; a grief when he called to mind the sinful ingratitude that needed correction. It is by the depth and reality, yea, the passion and *abandon* with which he utters the profoundest feelings of the pious heart, that David has moved so mightily the soul and spirit of the world. *Bishop Moorhouse.*

7. That explanation which regards the "enemies" as spiritual foes has a large measure of truth. It commended itself to a mind so far removed from mysticism as Arnold's. It is most valuable for devout private use of the Psalter. For, though we are come to Mount Zion, crested with the eternal calm, the opened ear can hear the thunder rolling along the peaks of Sinai. In the Gospel the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness. Sin is utterly hateful to God. The broad gates are flung wide open of the city that lies foursquare toward all the winds of heaven; for its ruler is divinely tolerant. But there shall in nowise enter it anything that defileth, neither whatever worketh abomination; for he is divinely intolerant too. And thus when, in public or private, we read these Psalms of imprecation, there is a lesson that comes home to us. We must read them, or dishonor God's Word. Reading them, we must depart from sin, or pronounce judgment upon ourselves. Impurity, hatred, every known sin of flesh or spirit—these, and not mistaken men, are the worst enemies of God and of His Christ. These were the dark hosts which swept through the Psalmist's vision when he cried, "Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed." *Bishop Alexander.*

8-10. Mark the sudden change, as of sunrise upon night. Already the prayer and the weeping have been heard. Already faith has triumphed. Already he can defy the enemies who have been maliciously anticipating his end, and tell them they shall be disappointed with a suddenness which only makes the disappointment more bitter. P.—Even while he is still pouring forth his mournful prayer, God's light and comfort fall suddenly into his heart. Enemies mock him as one whom God has forsaken, but even in the presence of his enemies he becomes conscious that such is not his case. In vs. 8 and 9 he thrice repeats, with upflashing

confidence, that God hears him: He hears his tearful sobbing that cries aloud to heaven, He hears his supplication, He graciously receives his prayer. D.—Despondency gives place to exultant hope and even confidence in God. "Depart from me," says he, "all ye workers of iniquity;" what more have I to do with you? Is not my God almighty to save? He has heard the voice of my weeping; it is enough! And he turns the sweet thought over and over: "The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping;" "the Lord hath heard my supplication;" the Lord not only hath in the nearer present, but will in the future receive my prayer. All will be well! C.

8. God stood looking on Hezekiah's tears (Isa. 38: 5), "I have seen thy tears." David's tears made music in God's ears, "*The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.*" It is a sight fit for angels to behold, tears as pearls dropping from a penitent eye. *T. Watson.*—When Antipater had written a large letter against Alexander's mother unto Alexander, the king answered him, "One tear from my mother will wash away all her faults." So it is with God. A penitent tear is an undeniable ambassador, and never returns from the throne of grace unsatisfied. *Spencer.*

9. **The Lord hath heard my supplication.** The Holy Spirit had wrought into the Psalmist's mind the confidence that his prayer was heard. We read of Luther that, having on one occasion wrestled hard with God in prayer, he came leaping out of his closet crying, "We have conquered, we have prevailed with God." Assured confidence is no idle dream, for when the Holy Ghost bestows it upon us we know its reality, and could not doubt it even though all men should deride our boldness. "*The Lord will receive my prayer.*" Here is past experience used for future encouragement. *He hath, He will.* Note this, O believer, and imitate its reasoning. S.

When thou prayest for spiritual graces, let thy prayer be absolute; when for temporal blessings, add a clause of God's pleasure; in both, with faith and humility. So shalt thou undoubtedly receive what thou desirest, or more, or better; never prayer rightly made was made unheard, or heard, ungranted. *Quarles.*

To pray for rain or sunshine, for health or food, is just as reasonable as to pray for gifts which the soul only can receive, for increased love, joy, peace, faith. All such prayers presuppose the truth that God is not the slave of

His own rules of action ; that He can innovate upon His work without forfeiting His perfection ; that law is only one way of conceiving of His regularized working, and not an external force which governs and moulds what we recognize as His work. It dissolves into thin air as

we look hard at it, this fancied barrier of inexorable law ; and as the mist clears off, beyond there is the throne of the Moral King of the universe, in whose eyes material symmetry is as nothing when compared with the spiritual well-being of His moral creatures. H. P. L.

PSALM VIII.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN ; SET TO THE GITTITH. A PSALM OF DAVID.

- 1 O LORD, our Lord,
How excellent is thy name in all the earth !
Who hast set thy glory upon the heavens.
- 2 Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast
thou established strength,
Because of thine adversaries,
That thou mightest still the enemy and the
avenger.
- 3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of
thy fingers,
The moon and the stars, which thou hast
ordained ;
- 4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him ?
And the son of man, that thou visitest him ?

- 5 For thou hast made him but little lower than
God,
And crownest him with glory and honour.
- 6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the
works of thy hands ;
Thou hast put all things under his feet :
- 7 All sheep and oxen,
Yea, and the beasts of the field ;
- 8 The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea,
Whatsoever passeth through the paths of the
seas.
- 9 O LORD, our Lord,
How excellent is thy name in all the earth !

THIS is the first of a number of Psalms which celebrate the praise of God in the phenomena of the natural world. The sun by day (Psalm 19), the moon and the stars by night (Psalm 8), the glory and the order of creation (Psalm 104), the terrors of the thunder-storm and the earthquake (Psalm 29), are all dwelt upon in Hebrew verse, and are described with a force and animation, a magnificence of imagination and coloring, which have never been surpassed in the poetry of any nation. But the Hebrew odes are never merely descriptive. There are pictures in them of extreme beauty and vividness, but the picture is never painted for its own sake. Nature is never regarded, whether in her aspect of terror or of grace, whether in her tumult or her repose, as an end in herself. The sense of God's presence of which the Psalmist is so profoundly conscious in his own spiritual life is that which gives its glory and its meaning to the natural world. There is a vivid realization of that presence as of a presence which fills the world, and from which there is no escape ; there is a closeness to God, as of one who holds and compasses us about (Psalm 139), in the mind of the inspired minstrels of

Israel, which, if it is characteristic of the Semitic races at large, is certainly in an emphatic degree characteristic of the Hebrews. This feeling lends its coloring to their poetry. Nature is full of God ; nature is the theatre of His glory. All admiration of nature in a rightly tuned heart is a confession of that glory. To such a heart there can be no praise of nature apart from the praise of God. All things are "of Him and through Him and to Him." The sun and the moon are His witnesses and heralds, the light is His robe, the clouds are His chariot, the thunder is His voice, the flashes of the lightning are His arrows and His spear. Apart from Him the universe is void and waste ; He gives it its life and meaning.

This eighth Psalm describes the impression produced on the heart of David as he gazed upon the heavens by night. In such a country as Palestine, in that clear Eastern atmosphere, "the moon and the stars" would appear with a splendor and a brilliancy of which we can scarcely conceive ; and as he fixes his eyes upon them, awed and solemnized, and yet attracted and inspired, by the spectacle, he breaks forth into admiring acknowledgment of that God,

who, as the God of Israel, has set His glory so conspicuously in the heavens that it is seen of all eyes and confessed even by the lisping tongues of children. They praise Him, and their scarcely articulate homage is a rebuke to wicked men who disregard or resist Him. But as the poet gazes on into the liquid depths of that starry sky, there comes upon him with overwhelming force the sense of his own insignificance. In sight of all that vastness, before all that evidence of creative power, how insignificant is man! "What is man that Thou art mindful of him?" is the natural utterance of the heart. What is man—man in his frailty, his littleness, his sin? What in the sight of Him who made those heavens, and planted in them those glittering orbs? This is the first feeling; but it is immediately swallowed up in another—the consciousness of man's true greatness, in nature all but Divine, of the seed-royal of the second Adam, of highest lineage and dignity, crowned and sceptred as a king: "Thou hast put all things under his feet." This is the principal thought; not man's littleness, but his greatness. This subject is boldly but briefly handled, and then the Psalm is brought to a fitting close with the same ascription of praise with which it opened. P.

This Psalm, like Psalm 104 and others, is a lyric echo of the Mosaic account of the creation. Ewald calls it a flash of lightning cast into the darkness of the creation. D.

Estimate the theologic value of this Psalm, its inspired import, by reading it as a bold contradiction of errors all around it: the dreams of Buddhism, the fables of Brahminism, the atheism of the Greek Philosophy, and the malign atheism of our modern metaphysics. Within the compass of these nine verses the celestial and terrestrial systems and the human economy are only poetically set forth; but they are *truly reported of*, as the three stand related to Religious Belief and to Religious Feeling. The astronomy of Oriental sages and of Greek philosophers are well-nigh forgotten; but David's astronomy lives, and it will ever live. I. T.

This Psalm connects the distant past with the far-off future—creation with redemption when complete—the first chapter of Genesis with the eleventh chapter of Isaiah; it is the poetic version of the former, and the germ of the prediction contained in the latter. This Psalm, moreover, is quoted three times in the New Testament. It is neither a directly Messianic Psalm, on the one hand, nor is its application to Christ a mere accommodation, on the other; the mid-

dle way is here the safe way, and so we regard it as typically Messianic. The type is the first Adam and the privileges of the human race in him; the antitype is the Second Adam and the glory, honor, and dominion of redeemed humanity as represented by Him. *J. J. Given.*

The Messianic import of the Psalm is not of a direct kind. It is, however, necessarily implied in that mysterious relation of man to God and that kingship over the inferior creatures of which the Psalm speaks, for this rests upon the incarnation. Man is what he is, because the Son of God has taken upon Him man's nature. Man is very near to God, higher than the angels, because the Christ is both God and man. This is the profound truth on which the Messianic character of the Psalm depends. This truth is the key to its interpretation. But it does not follow that David saw this distinctly. He takes what must in any case be the *religious* view of creation, and of man's relation to God on the one hand, and to the inferior animals on the other. David is manifestly speaking of the present. He sees the heavens witnessing for God; he sees man placed by God as ruler upon earth; he feels how high an honor has been put upon man; he marvels at God's grace and condescension. Man *is* king, however his authority may be questioned or defied. In the New Testament, verses of this Psalm are twice applied to Christ (besides our Lord's own quotation of v. 2). The incarnation explains the principle on which the quotations rest. In 1 Cor. 15: 27, Paul quotes, with a slight change, the words of v. 6, "Thou hast put all things under His feet," as describing accurately the complete subjection of the universe to Christ. The words may be true of man, but they are in their highest sense only true of Christ as the great head of mankind, and of man only in Him. Similarly the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (2: 6-9) argues that the words "Thou hast put all things under His feet" have not yet been literally fulfilled of man, and declares that their proper fulfilment is to be seen only in Jesus, whom God had made "a little lower than the angels," and had "crowned with glory and honor." He does not make use of the Psalm as a direct prediction, but he shows that man's place in creation is his in Christ; his destiny as depicted in the Psalm is not, and cannot be, accomplished out of Christ. He is the true Lord of all. In Him man reigns; in Him man shall yet be restored to his rightful lordship, and shall really and completely be in the new world of redemption what now he is but very imperfectly—God's vicegerent; rul-

ing a subject creation in peace and harmony and love.

A thousand years later other shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks by night on the same hills of Bethlehem, while the same stars looked down upon them from heaven. But a brighter glory than the glory of the stars shone round about them; and they knew better than David himself the meaning of David's words, "Lord, what is man, that Thou art mindful of him?" For to them it was said by the angel, "Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." P.

Title. "Upon Gittith" probably refers either to the instrument or to the music with which it should be sung. It appears also in the titles to Psalms 81 and 84, which like this are joyous in character. C.

I. Our Lord. For the first time in the Book of Psalms the personal feeling is lost sight of in the national. Jehovah is not the God of David only, but of Israel; fitting prelude to a Psalm which forgets the individual in the contemplation of God's glory in the universe. The thought which here appears is, in fact, the thought which is the key to the Book of Genesis, and indeed to the whole history of the Old Testament. The God who makes Himself known to Israel by His name Jehovah, as their Redeemer, is the God who created the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth. P.

Unable to express the glory of God, the Psalmist utters a note of exclamation, O Jehovah our Lord! For no heart can measure, no tongue can utter, the half of the greatness of Jehovah. The whole creation is full of His glory and radiant with the excellency of His power; His goodness and His wisdom are manifested on every hand. The countless myriads of terrestrial beings, from man the head, to the creeping worm at the foot, are all supported and nourished by the Divine bounty. The solid fabric of the universe leans upon His eternal arm. Universally is He present, and He worketh ever and everywhere. S.

Above the heavens. Not in the heavens, but even greater, beyond, and higher than they; "angels, principalities, and powers, being made subject unto Him." As Paul says, He hath "ascended up far above all heavens." And with this His glory above the heavens is connected, His sending forth His name upon earth through His Holy Spirit. And thus here: "Thy name excellent in all the world;" "Thy glory above the heavens." *I. Williams.*

2. Children, not "babes;" they are more advanced in age than the sucklings; so that there is a kind of climax, "not children only, but sucklings." As Hebrew mothers did not wean their children till they were three years old, this is no mere figure of speech. David speaks literally of children, and so our Lord Himself explains these words. P.—The simple heart of childhood loves to bear witness to the purity and glory of Jesus as it appeared when He entered Jerusalem in triumph. The same simple heart loves to bear like witness when it sees God in His great works in this beautiful and glorious world—which is the doctrine of our Psalm. Such testimony serves to silence the cavils of God's enemies. The words quietly suggest that it is only from enemies to God—from those who are His enemies in their heart by reason of their wicked works—that any counter voice is heard, disparaging to the great God. No other voice ever needs to be put to silence save that of prejudiced enemies. C.

David implies that when the discontents and mutinies of men against the Divine Laws had disturbed his heart and lowered his hopes for humanity, he turned from men to babes and sucklings; and that he found in their trust and love, their content and peace, a stronghold from doubt and care. And he ranks this stronghold, the influence of children, with man's lordship over nature—declares the one fact to be just as valuable and hopeful as the other. At first, indeed, there does seem a vast disproportion between David's two grounds of hope for the human race. One ground is man's sovereignty over the animate and inanimate creation; the other is the simplicity, the obedience, the trust and love of little children. But think what human life would be if we had no "babes and sucklings" to love, to work for, to play with, to reprove our grossness with their innocence, our worldliness with their unworldliness. Would it be worth having? Would not all the sweetness and spirituality of it be gone? Why, half our mirth, and more than half the motives which ennoble and purify our toils, half our piety and more than half our love come to us through children! What sports and recreations should we have, to call us away from our drudgery, but for them? What kind thoughts, what tenderness, what good resolves, what laughter, what tears, do we not owe to them! What lessons of heavenly wisdom and goodness do we learn while teaching them! How often do we suppress an evil word or look lest we should injure them! How often do we think

of God that we may speak to them of Him! how often pray that we may teach them to pray, or because, more even than for ourselves, we desire God's blessing on them! With what force do the simplest words of supplication from their lips strike upon our hearts! With what a pure and sacred gladness are we filled as we see them take delight in acts of kindness and self-sacrifice! *It is the little children who save the world*—save it from its worldliness, its selfishness, its hardness of heart. That God sent them in their innocence and simplicity to make us pure and simple—that He sends them generation after generation—is not that, after all, quite as weighty and hopeful a fact as man's lordship over the beasts of the field, and the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea? Was not David right in regarding "babes and sucklings" as one of God's greatest gifts to the race—a gift full of Divine promise and hope? Are they not a "stronghold" for our thoughts, our affections, our pious trust in God, when our hearts are fretted with cares and hardened with regrets? *Cox.*

3-5. David, familiar from boyhood with rural life, had learned to see God in nature, and thus to add to the beauty and glory of natural objects in themselves the thought of the Divine wisdom and goodness reflected in them all. His shepherd life in the open fields, and upon the slopes of the mountains, had acquainted him with the habits of birds and beasts, and had led him to observe the stars in his nightly watches. Those youthful experiences, matured by the meditations of riper years, find expression in this Psalm. In the nineteenth Psalm he celebrates the glory of the sun. But now, sitting at eventide upon the housetop, under the mild and lustrous Syrian sky, he is absorbed with the beauty and order of the moon and stars. These are God's possession—"Thy heavens;" the work of His "*finger*," manifesting beauty and skill; "*ordained*" with Divine wisdom and order, and established forever. The first thought awakened in him by the contemplation of this majesty and glory is of the littleness of man. What was David's kingdom in comparison with a single star? what his royal splendor beside the brightness of the moon? Yet with this came the thought of the condescending goodness of God, who made man in His image, the representative of His glory and dominion. The word "*angels*," *Elohim*, is commonly used for the name of God: "Thou madest man but little short of the Divine." This high dignity and prerogative man disgraced and forfeited by the fall;

but it was restored in Jesus, the Second Adam, "crowned with glory and honor." While we praise God in His works, let us, above all, bless and honor Him in His Son, the head and glory of our redeemed humanity. J. P. T.

3, 4. The Psalmist leaves the world, and lifts his imagination to that mighty expanse which spreads above it and around it. He wings his way through space, and wanders in thought over its immeasurable regions. Instead of a dark and unpeopled solitude, he sees it crowded with splendor, and filled with the energy of the Divine presence. Creation rises in its immensity before him, and the world, with all which it inherits, shrinks into littleness at a contemplation so vast and so overpowering. He wonders that he is not overlooked amid the grandeur and the variety which are on every side of him, and passing upward from the majesty of nature to the majesty of nature's Architect, he exclaims, "What is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou shouldest deign to visit him?" *Chalmers.*

The first feeling is an overpowering sense of man's insignificance in presence of the vastness and splendor, the mysterious depth, and the exceeding glory of the heavens, as seen at night. "The vault of the sky arched at a vast and unknown distance over our heads; the stars apparently infinite in number, each keeping its appointed place and course, and seeming to belong to a wide system of things which has no relation to the earth, while man is but one among many millions of the earth's inhabitants; all this makes the contemplative spectator feel how exceedingly small a portion of the universe he is; how little he must be in the eyes of an Intelligence which can embrace the whole." Add to this revelation of darkness the revelation of silence—the man is alone; the stir and noise of his own works, which in the light of day filled and absorbed him, are hushed and buried in darkness; his importance is gone; and "every person in every age and country will recognize as irresistibly natural the train of thought expressed by the Hebrew Psalmist." P.

It can hardly be questioned that, of all scientific truths, those of astronomy are most calculated to impress upon the thoughtful mind the greatness and power of the Creator, the insignificance of man and earthly things, and at the same time to inculcate a profound reverence for the Divine something within ourselves—the "image of God," in which we were created, and by virtue of which we human beings are, in a

sense, greater than the whole material universe, as being able, in some degree, to master and comprehend it. It is well worth while, now and then, to spend a little time in quiet contemplation of the simple facts, to endeavor to grasp their magnitude and meaning, and mentally and spiritually to take the place and attitude which they indicate as reasonable—an attitude of humility and reverence toward God, and also of self-respect as His children and partakers of His nature.

In imagination we transport ourselves to the sun ; we consider its bulk, huger than a million earths could fill, the ineffable glory of its light, and the unimaginable intensity and quality of its heat, which gives life and vigor to all the planetary systems, flowing out for centuries, seemingly, without diminution, and maintained in some mysterious way, which as yet we can only guess at ; an unconsuming and apparently unreplenished fire, such as Moses gazed upon of old, when God appeared to him in the bush. We stagger under such conceptions of power and motion and immensity ; but we have hardly made a beginning yet. We try to conceive of greater spaces and more tremendous forces. We consider the visible stars, so far away that though really suns, and many of them vaster than our own, they look like mere twinkling points ; the nearest of them more than two hundred thousand times as distant as our sun, or nearly four years' journey for a flash of light ; and the remotest of them—no one knows—no one can tell how long light takes to bring its message from them, but unquestionably centuries, and perhaps millenniums. Then we look into our telescopes, and the number of the stars increases many thousand-fold, clusters and nebulae come crowding into sight ; and the range of distance and dimensions thus brought to human knowledge grows in proportion to the telescopic power as compared with that of the unaided eye. It is hopeless to image such immensities, and with weary helplessness we simply cease the struggle.

Our little world ! The merest dust-mote dancing in the sunbeam is in bulk a vastly more important portion of the earth than the earth herself of even that portion of the stellar universe revealed by our present telescopes. And what of the beyond—that which is still unknown to us because of feeble vision or cosmic haze, or, perhaps, because separated from us by unfathomable spaces empty of the mysterious "ether" by which alone we are brought into sensible relations with distant orbs and worlds. So also when we measure human life

and history in their time-relations against astronomical periods and cosmical affairs, we reach very similar proportions. A human life, even the longest, bears only some such ratio to the duration of a star as the bulk of the human body to that of the star. We have in astronomy to do with periods of time, some of them, it is true, short, even in comparison with earthly affairs, but mostly long, and some of them immeasurable and inconceivable. The scale of time is as vast as that of space ; and when we set ourselves, our little lives and human interests, against the worlds and stars of heaven, we come to know the Psalmist's meaning when he wrote, "Lord, what is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou visitest him ?" *C. A. Young.*

3. The stars. I cannot say that it is chiefly the contemplation of their infinitude, and the immeasurable space they occupy, that enraptures me in the stars. But the mere thought they are so far beyond and above everything terrestrial—the feeling that before them everything earthly so utterly vanishes to nothing—that the single man is so infinitely insignificant in the comparison with these worlds strewn over all space—that his destinies, his enjoyments, and sacrifices, to which he attaches such a minute importance—how all these fade like nothing before such immense objects ; then, that the constellations bind together all the races of man and all the eras of the earth, that they have beheld all that has passed since the beginning of time and will see all that passes until its end ; in thoughts like these I can always lose myself with a silent delight in the view of the starry firmament. It is in very truth a spectacle of the highest solemnity, when in the stillness of night, in a heaven quite clear, the stars, like a choir of worlds, arise and descend, while existence, as it were, falls asunder into two separate parts ; the one, belonging to earth, grows dumb in the utter silence of night, and thereupon the other mounts upward in all its elevation, splendor, and majesty. When contemplated from this point of view, the starry heavens have truly a moral influence on the mind. *Humboldt.*

There can be no doubt that if the understanding of man (as well as his other faculties) were in the state of unimpaired simplicity, the spectacle of the universe would teach him piety, even if he had not learned it in some more direct way. First the exterior magnificence of the skies, so brightly symbolizing as it does the wealth and splendor of Almighty Regal Power, and then those severer calculations and rational

conjectures, wherein the mind penetrates beyond the mere beauty and grandeur of the scene, and eagerly makes its path athwart the unmeasured spaces, and subjoins to what is visible, its own vigorous conceptions of magnitude, number, distance; from both these sources, a mind retaining its integrity would infer the great truth of the Divine Existence; and its power, and wisdom, and beneficence. I. T.

When man looks abroad on the universe and cries: "How can God be mindful of me," is it not plain that his mind has taken the great thought of the universe, and the great thought of God, into itself? And what a mind that is which can thus soar away from itself; which can strive to fathom immensity and deplore its partial success! What a mind that is which mourns that its attainments fall so short of its desires! The weakness of man is one of the grandest proofs of his greatness, because it is a conscious weakness—a weakness from which, in thought and aspiration, he has already escaped. *G. P. Fisher.*

Science is the rival of imagination, and by teaching that these stars are suns has given a new interest to the anticipations of eternity, which can supply such inexhaustible materials of intelligence and wonder. Yet these stars seem to confess that there must be still sublimer regions for the reception of spirits, refined beyond the intercourse of all material lights; and even leave us to imagine that the whole material universe itself is only a place where beings are appointed to originate and to be educated through successive scenes, till, passing over its utmost bounds to the immensity beyond, they there at length find themselves in the immediate presence of the Divinity. J. F.—Great is the beauty of the earth, the brightness of the sun, the moon and the stars cheering the night. Yet is not my thirst stayed then; I admire these and praise these—I thirst for Him who made them. *Augustine.*

4. Thou art mindful of him. Man is worse than weak, he is sinful. He broke the covenant of his God at the beginning; he has continued his rebellion from then till now. Yet God has not forgotten him. He was mindful of man when in the beginning He created the heavens. He was mindful of him when He arranged and organized them as they at present exist. He was mindful of him when He prepared this world as his place of abode, ordaining the sun to rule the day, and the moon to rule the night. He was mindful of man when He arranged the pleasing vicissitudes of

the seasons; when He renewed His covenant with man, saying, "While earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease." He is mindful of him when from year to year and season to season He makes the grass to grow for the cattle and herb for the service of man; when the eyes of all things wait on Him and do not wait in vain, for He openeth His hand liberally, and satisfieth the wants of every living thing. *Given.*—God is mindful of man at every moment of his existence—mindful of infancy, of boyhood, manhood in the toils of active life, of age, when all other mindfulness terminates, and when the ties of earth have been loosened one by one. He is mindful of us inasmuch as He has provided all things needful for our existence and happiness. And when, in the fulness of time, the Son of God was incarnate in furtherance of the purpose of the Father, surely God was mindful of His creatures then. Since the Son has ascended up to heaven, God has been mindful of man in the operations and influences of the Spirit. *Punshon.*

The Gospel alone discloses in God depths of compassion transcending even heights of power, and points us to a Being who crowns His own nature, as He crowns us, "with lovingkindness and tender mercy." When we take this view, we see that man has been placed in this world in the midst of concentric circles of Divine attributes, which become charged with deeper interest as they press in closer toward him. The inmost circle of fatherly love and forgiving mercy remains in the approach of God to the individual soul. Such a circle there must be; and when we feel its clasp on our hearts, we learn, in the language of the poet, "that the world is made for each of us." *J. Ker.*—Could we once break through this deadening influence of regularity, where the very love of God is hidden in its own constancy; could we see and feel that we are indeed utterly, and always, and afresh every instant, at our Maker's disposal and dependent on His will—every fibre of the body kept in place by His care, and every breath inspired by Him, and the whole spirit subject and amenable to Him; could we then begin to consider His patience and recount His gifts—His patience with us from the cradle, and with the race from Eden—His gifts, as many as the organs, inlets, faculties, tissues, powers, of all our complex being multiplied by all the seconds of our life; could we then rise from this to some worthy conception of His own Infinite Life—boundless, fathomless, endless,

yet all intensest life—the majesty, the might, the dominion—the purity, the pity, the wisdom, the love;—God forbearing with all this impious folly, God enduring all this abhorrent selfishness, God upholding all these unprofitable and unthankful creatures, if so be that possibly something may yet be recovered of their self-destruction, and the well-beloved Son dying for that;—and could we at last put in contrast with Him our lives, so mean, so weak, so bad—then should we not be ready to exclaim, with something more than a mere recitation of the memory, “Lord! what is man that Thou art mindful of him? God be merciful to me a sinner!” F. D. H.

5. Lower than God. There is obviously a reference in v. 6 to Gen. 1: 26, and therefore here, doubtless, an allusion to the creation of man in the image of God. P.—The Psalmist had intimated the littleness of man, as we have seen, but here he dwells on the greatness of man. He is made in the image of God, and with dominion over the creatures of God. *Given.*—Man is a feeble reed, trembling in the midst of creation; but then he is endowed with thought. It does not need the universe to arm for his destruction. A breath of wind, a drop of water will suffice to kill him. But, though the universe were to fall on man and crush him, he would be greater in his death than the universe in its victory; for he would be conscious of his defeat, and it would not be conscious of its triumph. *Pascal.*

Soul, with its will, feeling, intelligence, and capacities for happiness and virtue, is universally felt by thinking men to be the highest as well as the most mysterious sort of known being. Not the grandest masses of matter, such as mountains, oceans, stars—not the most subtle and forceful material elements, such, for example, as produce the phenomena of light, electricity, and gravitation—not any conceivable combination of such elements can compare in wonderfulness and nobleness with the soul of a Newton. *Burr.*

And what shall we say of this *mind* of Man?—its power of reasoning, which grasps the facts of the external world and the truths of the inner world of consciousness, and weaves them into consecutive chains of ideas, and builds up fabrics of thought that will stand though the physical universe shall fall?—this Mind that, from a few arbitrary characters and a few articulate sounds, constructs a language that expresses thought, that stirs emotion, that kindles passions or allays them—language that makes the printed page glow with the fire and beauty

of poetry, that makes the air pulsate with the throbs of eloquence?—this Mind that from a few arbitrary figures, that you may count upon your fingers, constructs the abstract science of mathematics, by which it weighs the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance; by which it measures the velocity of light and the distances and magnitudes of the stars? This Mind of Man, with its powers of Reason, Imagination, Memory, Will—with its hopes and fears, its joys and loves—this Mind that *knows itself*, and that dominates all matter and all life without itself—can it be less than the immediate offspring of God? J. P. T.

Man was not made for the world, but the world for man; all its laws were mute predictions of what he would be; all nature was pre-configured to him, and looked forward to his coming; the earth also was designed to be a temple for man's worship, where he might find himself surrounded by the symbols of the Godhead—where every object on which his eye may rest is either an “altar of memorial,” or an offering to be laid on it. “Even the earth itself, as it goes speeding through space, what should it be but an altar at which he should be perpetually ministering as the high-priest of nature?” *J. Harris.*—Man is the summit and pinnacle of creation, the crown of the completed whole, the priest in the finished temple of God, whence without him no note of worship worthy of God should ascend from rational and moral beings. *Van O.*

6-8. A crown is mentioned in v. 5, and a crown imports a king, and a king implies a kingdom; and so in vs. 6-8 we are informed of the extent of man's dominion, and of the various subjects of his kingly rule. Thus man was set up as God's viceroy on earth. He was invested with full kingly dominion under Divine suzerainty. *Given.*—All Thy creation hath not more wonder in it than one of us: other creatures Thou madest by a simple command; man, not without a Divine consultation; others at once; man Thou didst form, then inspire; others in several shapes, like to none but themselves; man, after Thine own image; others with qualities fit for service; man, for dominion. Man had his name from Thee; they had their names from man. How should we be consecrated to Thee above all others, since Thou hast bestowed more cost on us than other! *Bishop H.*

What, then, is the right effect upon our hearts of this discovery of God's limitless working, His immeasurable condescension? It is to do away with our fear; it is to tell us that there is noth-

ing incredible or preposterous in the thought that He visits us, and expends even upon us all the riches of His care and love. The heavens declare His glory, and proclaim it to be infinite. Why may not the Gospel be a similar declaration of His highest attribute, a witness borne to the universe that His mercy is infinite also? And if man is a being so precious, so unique in his origin and destiny, if God has bestowed such manner of love upon him as Christ bids us believe, then what an appeal is made to him to live up to his unspeakable dignity! "It is the highest effort of his culture," says Bernard, "when a man comes to care for himself for the sake of his God;" when, that is, his sovereign desire is to be worthier of the rank with which God has invested him and of the love which God has lavished upon him. *R. Duckworth.*

Put all things under his feet. Man is a king. God has put a crown upon his head, and not only so, but has given him a territory and subjects. "All things under his feet," with evident reference to the "let them have dominion," of Gen. 1:26. What David means by "all things" is then explained—beasts, birds, and fishes, which are in the same manner enumerated in Gen. 1. Paul, however, extends the meaning of the "all things" far beyond this. Jesus, as the true Lord of all, shall have a universal dominion. P.—The Psalmist extends his statement to the human race. The apostle does the same, but he looks up to Jesus, in whom alone the grand ideal of humanity is realized, and sees Him already crowned with glory and honor; and then he directs his gaze onward and forward anticipatively to the time when this text shall be fully accomplished, and all things completely subject to redeemed humanity and its glorified Head. *Gren.*—The central point of the New Testament consciousness is indeed Jesus, the Restorer of what is lost. Redeemed humanity in the person of Jesus is already enthroned at God's right hand. Everything is as absolutely subjected to Him as it is stated to be in the Psalm; not only the animal world, not only the earth, but the universe, with all the forces that are working in it, those that are hostile to God as well as those that are in His service, yea, even the power of death. D.

The highest fulfilment of these words can be found nowhere short of Him who loved to call Himself the "Son of man." "Thou hast put all things under His feet." This is what only God has either the right or the power to do. It is not merely supreme power that is here spoken of; it is supreme authority, as when

our Lord said to His disciples, "All power is given to Me." In the days of His flesh He constantly exercised four kinds of authority: the authority to forgive sin, the authority to declare truth, the authority to rule nature, and the authority over human hearts and consciences. The claim of universal and absolute obedience and these four are in close, inseparable moral unity. "All things"—small things as well as great. The hairs of your head are all numbered; your name is not unknown to Him. The chief lesson in these words is for every Christian a lesson of restful calm, peaceful, untroubled faith, but faith surely tempered with reverence. All things are naked and open to Him with whom we have to do. *E. R. Conder.*

9. The Psalm closes with the same expression of loving admiration with which it opened, but with added emphasis after the singer has told the tale of God's goodness to man; just as the repetition of a passage in music falls more sensibly on the ear, and touches the heart with quicker emotions, than the same passage when it first occurs. P.—He has demonstrated the assertion that the name of Jehovah, whose glory the heavens reflect, is also glorious on earth. And so he can conclude by repeating the thought with which he began, only now in a fuller sense, and weave his Psalm as it were into a wreath. D.—More fit words no human mind has conceived or pen recorded. And if we may include in the scope of this Psalm not the material world only, but the moral also—not only man as a race with no Christ in it, but the race with an incarnate Saviour as part and even the chief part of it, how will the manifestations of God in all the earth—in all its moral history, in all the destiny of its once living men, saints and sinners, become the admiration, the wonder, the praise of the intelligent universe forever! C.

9. **Our Lord.** If we turn to the sacred record of God's creation of the world, we cannot overlook or mistake the two great religious truths which stand side by side on its page, the twofold revelation of one and the same God as the Creator of the material universe and as the personal Providence that watches over the life and actions of men. The whole scheme of Holy Scripture from the beginning to the end is one continuous record of God's love and care for man in creation, government, redemption; and as such it is a revelation, not for this or that age alone, but for every generation of mankind, as our best and truest safeguard against an error into which human thought in every

age is very prone to fall. Modern sophistry is ready to tell us that one law of cause and effect reigns supreme over mind as well as matter, that the actions of man, like the other phenomena of the universe, are but links in a chain of rigid and necessary consequences. Against this perversion Scripture furnishes a standing protest, and if read aright, a safeguard. God is revealed to man as He is revealed to no other of His visible creatures, not as God merely, but as our God, the personal God of His personal creatures. *II. L. Mansel.*

All the earth. We may boldly affirm that earth is not too small a globe to be thought worthy of giving birth to the heirs of immortality; nor is man too diminutive a being to hold converse with his Creator, or to be amenable to the Divine government. The very multiplicity of worlds, instead of favoring such a conclusion, refutes it by showing that the Creator prefers, as the field of His cares and beneficence, limited and separate portions of matter rather than immense masses. It is manifest that the omnipotent wisdom and power loves to divide itself upon the individuality of its works. To exist at all as a member of so vast an assemblage of beings, and to occupy a footing in the universe such as it is, involves incalculable probabilities of future good or ill. *I. T.*

There have been those who have stood under the starry heavens, and in contrasting the immensity of the universe as revealed by modern science with the earth, as a mere speck, and with man, in his brief day upon it, have felt that the great doctrines of the incarnation, and of redemption by the Son of God, could not be true. The impression is natural, and at times overwhelming, and yet it is but an impression. Seen in its true light, the very insignificance of the earth and the low rank of man are the indispensable condition for the fullest display of the Divine attributes, and so, for that is the same thing, of the Divine glory. Nor, in the light of modern science, is the obscurity of this earth, and the apparent insignificance of what takes place upon it, any bar to its fullest publicity in the remotest world in space, if so be that intelligent beings dwell there. When science says, as it does, that the action of gravitation is instantaneous throughout space, it shuts the mouth of incredulity when we assert a possible sympathy and unity of a higher kind in the intelligent universe of God. Knowing, then, that God could not be better than He is; that the love revealed in Christ could not be greater than it is; that the heaven provided for those who love God could not be more blessed

than it is; finding in the Scriptures as much of optimism as we had a right to expect; finding, also, in them the revelation of a future which gives us a possible key to the fearful perplexities of the present state, we welcome each gleam of light, and wait with patience and hope the coming of that perfect day of "the restitution of all things of which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." In the coming of such a day, thus revealed, we find that solution of the mystery of the present state for which our whole nature cries out. *M. H.*

Like its own Bethlehem Ephratah, little among thousands of worlds, our earth already stands alone in the universe, and will stand forth in the annals of eternity, illustrious for its fact without a parallel. It is the world on which the mystery of redemption was transacted; it is the world into which Christ came. And though lower than the angels, ours is the race which Jehovah has crowned with one peerless glory, one unequalled honor. It is the race which God has visited. Ours is the flesh which Incarnate Deity wore, and ours is the race for whose sinners the Son of God poured forth a ransom in His blood. This is the event which over our small planet sheds a solemn interest, and draws toward it the wondering gaze of other worlds. *Hamilton.*

If we believe in a God who created the world and made man in it, it is surely reasonable to believe also that He will guide His work to its proper end, and that the highest part of man's nature will not be left to neglect. A dignified idea of either God or man will not incline us to believe that things are abandoned to chance-hazard here. If we see God exerting His power and wisdom in multiplying and adorning forms of dead matter—if we behold Him piling them in heaven-soaring mountains, brightening them into resplendent suns, and scattering them through space in infinitely varied combinations—it is not too much to expect that He will exert these same attributes in retrieving from loss and in raising to fresh spiritual power that immortal mind which is the true image of Himself—which alone of all His works can comprehend Him, and can return the expressions of His intelligence and love.

So far from what God has done for the world of matter, in the fields of astronomy, being any reason for discrediting what the Gospel declares He has done for the world of mind in man, it should be a reason for believing it. If He has lavished so much of pains and skill upon a uni-

verse of death, what may we not anticipate for one of life? If He has expended so much upon the mere pedestal and platform of being, what upon the thinking immortal spirit, on whose account alone the basement and outer furniture of the world are there? Belief in the Gospel will become an easier thing to us in proportion as we realize the greatness of the soul, and breathe the air of eternity. *Ker.*

If the contemplation of the universe presses upon us the question, What is man? and gives no answer to the question in which we can without difficulty acquiesce, no answer which reconciles the conflicting evidence of his greatness and his insignificance, or which gives an intelligible theory of the distinction between his relation to God and that of other creatures, then we find in the birth of Christ the very answer we need. The Word, who was with God and was God, became flesh: the Son of God became the Son of man. Then men are precious in the eyes of God: the race of man is glorified in the manhood of Christ; and each individual man may rejoice when he remembers that he is clothed in flesh, which God Himself condescended to assume. *Bishop H. Goodwin.*

—It is the glory of the world, that He who formed it dwelt on it; of the air, that He breathed in it; of the sun, that it shone on Him; of the ground, that it bare Him; of the sea, that He walked on it; of the elements, that they nourished Him; of the waters, that they refreshed Him; of us men, that He lived and died among us; yea, that He lived and died for us; that He assumed our flesh and blood, and carried it to the highest heavens, where it shines as the eternal ornament and wonder of the creation of God. Christ on the cross is the measure of man's worth in the eyes of God, and of man's place in the creation; Christ on the throne is the prophecy of man's dignity, and of his most sure dominion. When bordering on despair at the sight of so much going wrong, so much ignorance, sorrow, and vice, so many darkened understandings, and broken hearts, such wide tracts of savagery and godlessness, I can look up to Jesus, and can see far, far away—the furthest thing on the horizon—like some nebula, faint, it is true, and low down, but flickering with true starry light—the wondrous vision of many souls brought into glory, even a world redeemed. When conscious of personal imperfection and much sin, no thought will bring peace nor kindle hope but this, that Christ has died to bring me to God, and lives to bring me to glory. Then behold Jesus entered within the veil for us.

Here, from far beneath, look up through the heavens to Him who is “made higher than” them all. And hereafter, from the supreme height and pinnacle of the throne of Christ, we shall look down on sun, moon, and stars that once shone so far above us; and, conscious that His grace has raised us up on high, and put all things under our feet, shall exclaim with yet deeper thankfulness and more reverent wonder, “What is man, that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?” *A. M.*

The estimate we make of man's place in God's universe depends upon the criterion by which we judge. There is a sense in which, viewed as a *physical force* in the world of matter, man is nothing. The physical man compared with the stupendous forces of nature, or viewed from the standpoint of duration, or set in opposition to the omnipotence of God, is insignificance itself. *If we contemplate man simply as a being of intelligence*, the scale begins to turn. The fact of a thinking mind in man puts him above sun, moon, and stars. Mind is above matter, intelligence above force. But the importance of man in the universe is greatly heightened *when we advance from the mental to the moral.*

“Two objects,” said Kant, “fill my soul with ever-increasing admiration and respect—above us the starry heavens, within us the moral law.” Man is a member of the kingdom of spirits. He is capable of virtue and of sin. He is the offspring of God, and in this lies his greatness. He is a free being, capable of self-improvement and self-destruction. He can contend with his Maker. “What is man that Thou art mindful of him?” finds its answer here—“Thou hast made him to lack but little of divinity. Thou hast clothed him with glory and honor.” “Why visit him?” The answer is here—man is an *immortal* being. *Man as a sinner is of special importance.* Viewed simply as a sinner, he looms up in the Divine government above the stars. He has lifted up the hand of rebellion against God. Angels veil their faces and love and adore God. This man lifts his guilty hand and defies Him. *A sufferer is a being of importance in God's universe.* Man is a sufferer, and is worthy of God's thought and visitation. However feeble, as compared with the stupendous forces of nature, however obscure in rank; yet, if he *suffers*, and is liable to suffer *forever*, he becomes at once an object of the highest importance in the Divine government. Such is man—a great sufferer here, and liable to eternal pain hereafter. Hence the God of mercy is “mindful

of him," and sets His heart upon him, and visits him every day. *The crowning proof of man's greatness and worth in the Divine government must be taken from God's own estimate;* and that is found in the sacrifice that God has made to restore man to the high place from which he has fallen. It is in view of the Incarnation and of the Cross that we see man "crowned with glory and honor." In the Bible we have an account of the Creation and an account of Redemption. The story of Creation gives us an impression of the *ease* with which it was done. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." How different the account of Redemption! The moon and the stars cost nothing—the redemption of the soul cost God's Only Begotten Son.

We thus find *the fact and the reasonableness of the fact that God is "mindful of us."* We have a place in God's thoughts. The weakest and

most unworthy of us all engages the Divine mind, and is an object of interest and solicitude to the Divine heart. *We see that the real greatness of man as a sinner lies in his penitence, contrition, confession;* for that reopens the way for the incoming and indwelling of the Divine Spirit. "Know ye not that your bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost?" *If a man is worth so much to God, he surely ought to be of great value to himself.* If God is thus mindful of him, what madness for him to be unmindful of God! *If man is so important a creature as a sinner and as a sufferer, how much more so as a Christian!* When he becomes a redeemed soul, a sufferer healed, a slave emancipated, a restored and sanctified man, raised by the love of Christ and the indwelling of the Spirit to think God's thoughts, to walk in God's fellowship and to be one in God's family—then he is indeed "crowned with glory and honor." *J. Brand.*

PSALM IX.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN; SET TO MUTH-LABBEN. A PSALM OF DAVID.

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| <p>1 I WILL give thanks unto the LORD with my whole heart ;
I will shew forth all thy marvellous works.</p> <p>2 I will be glad and exult in thee :
I will sing praise to thy name, O thou Most High.</p> <p>3 When mine enemies turn back,
They stumble and perish at thy presence.</p> <p>4 For thou hast maintained my right and my cause ;
Thou satest in the throne judging righteously.</p> <p>5 Thou hast rebuked the nations, thou hast destroyed the wicked,
Thou hast blotted out their name for ever and ever.</p> <p>6 The enemy are come to an end, they are desolate for ever ;
And the cities which thou hast overthrown,
Their very memorial is perished.</p> <p>7 But the LORD sitteth <i>as king</i> for ever :
He hath prepared his throne for judgment.</p> | <p>8 And he shall judge the world in righteousness,
He shall minister judgment to the peoples in uprightness.</p> <p>9 The LORD also will be a high tower for the oppressed,
A high tower in times of trouble ;</p> <p>10 And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee ;
For thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.</p> <p>11 Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion :
Declare among the people his doings.</p> <p>12 For he that maketh inquisition for blood remembereth them :
He forgetteth not the cry of the poor.</p> <p>13 Have mercy upon me, O LORD ;
Behold my affliction <i>which I suffer</i> of them that hate me,
Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death ;</p> |
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14 That I may shew forth all thy praise :
In the gates of the daughter of Zion,
I will rejoice in thy salvation.

15 The nations are sunk down in the pit that
they made :
In the net which they hid is their own foot
taken.

16 The LORD hath made himself known, he
hath executed judgment :
The wicked is snared in the work of his own
hands. [Higgaion. Selah

17 The wicked shall return to Sheol, [*the unseen
world,*]

Even all the nations that forget God.

18 For the needy shall not alway be forgotten,
Nor the expectation of the poor perish for
ever.

19 Arise, O LORD ; let not man prevail :
Let the nations be judged in thy sight.

20 Put them in fear, O LORD :
Let the nations know themselves to be but
men. [Selah

THIS Psalm expresses, in a series of natural and striking alternations, gratitude for past deliverances, trust in God's power and disposition to repeat them, and direct and earnest prayer for such repetition. A.—A thanksgiving to God, the righteous Judge, who punishes the wicked and defends the cause of the oppressed. Throughout, with the exception of v. 13, the Psalm is one continued strain of triumph. P.—It is a thoroughly national and triumphant hymn of thanksgiving, composed by David at the time when Jehovah was already enthroned upon Zion, and is, therefore, to be dated from the time after the ark was brought to Jerusalem. D.

1, 2. "*I will confess unto Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart.*" Behold, with what a flood of the most sweet affections he says that he "*will confess,*" "*show forth,*" "*rejoice,*" "*be glad,*" and "*sing,*" being filled with ecstasy ! He does not simply say, "*I will confess,*" but, "*with my heart,*" and "*with my whole heart.*" Nor does he propose to speak simply of "*works,*" but of the "*marvellous works*" of God, and of "*all*" those "*works.*" Thus his spirit exults and rejoices in God his Saviour, who has done great things for him, and those marvellous things which follow. In which words are opened the subject of this Psalm—that is, that he therein sings the marvellous works of God. Luther.—Holy joy is the life of thankful praise, as thankful praise is the language of holy joy ; *I will be glad and rejoice in Thee.* Whatever occurs to make us glad, our joy must pass through it, and terminate in God only ; *I will be glad and rejoice in Thee,* not in the gift so much as in the Giver. H.

All Thy marvellous works. Here is eternal work for us, for there can be no end to the showing forth of *all* His deeds of love. If we consider our own sinfulness and nothingness, we must feel that every work of preservation, forgiveness, conversion, deliverance, sanctification, which the Lord has wrought for us or in

us is a *marvellous* work. Even in heaven, Divine lovingkindness will doubtless be as much a theme of surprise as of rapture. S.

3, 4. That his enemies fall and perish *in God's presence* shows that their being turned back in defeat and flight is attributed to God's arm. He *was there.* They fell before His face. And this fall of theirs came of the fact that the Lord appeared in power to vindicate the cause of His anointed king, His servant David. C.

7. *And Jehovah to eternity, forever, will sit,* as He sits now, upon the throne and judgment-seat. *He has set up for judgment,* for the purpose of acting as a judge, *His throne.* It is not as an absolute or arbitrary ruler, but as a just judge, that Jehovah reigns. This recognition of God's judicial character and office as perpetual is intended to prepare the way for an appeal to His righteous intervention in the present case. A.

King forever. He always was, always is, and always will be what He is. He remains always the same in being ; so far from any change, that no shadow of it can touch Him. He will continue in being as long as He hath already enjoyed it ; and if we could add never so many millions of years together, we are still as far from an end as from a beginning, for "*the Lord shall endure forever.*" As it is impossible He should not be, being from all eternity, so it is impossible that He should not be to all eternity. Charnock.—There is no change of His being ; His felicity, power, and perfection are out of the reach of all the combined forces of hell and earth ; they may put an end to our liberties, our privileges, our lives, but our God is still the same, and sits even upon the floods, unshaken, undisturbed. 29 : 10 ; 93 : 2. H.—The enduring existence and unchanging dominion of our Jehovah are the firm foundations of our joy. The enemy and his destructions shall come to a perpetual end, but God and His throne shall *endure forever.* The

eternity of Divine sovereignty yields unfailing consolation. S.

8-10. It is *because* God rules the nations and the people of the earth in righteousness that He will surely prove Himself a refuge for the oppressed. For it is mainly to vindicate the cause of the oppressed that God rules the nations at all, His purpose being to restrain sin and crime and to break in pieces the oppressor. They who know God's name in the sense of knowing these grand elements of His glorious character as a righteous ruler of wicked men and wicked devils will surely put their trust in Him, for all the history of time shows that God has never forsaken those who have sought His aid against wrong-doers. C.

8. He shall judge the world in righteousness. In this judgment tears will not prevail, prayers will not be heard, promises will not be admitted, repentance will be too late; and as for riches, honorable titles, sceptres, and diadems, these will profit much less; and the inquisition shall be so curious and diligent, that not one light thought nor one idle word (not repented of in the life past) shall be forgotten. For truth itself hath said, "Of every idle word which men have spoken, they shall give an account in the day of judgment." Oh, how many which now sin with great delight will be then astonished, ashamed, and silent! *Tymme.*—In the administration of His government He does all every day, He will do all at the last day, according to the eternal, unalterable rules of equity (v. 8); *He shall judge the world*, all persons and all controversies, shall minister judgment to the people, shall determine their lot both in this and in the future state, in righteousness and in uprightness, so that there shall not be the least color of exception against it.

9. Peculiar favor God bears to His own people, and special protection He takes them under. The Lord, who endures forever, is their everlasting Strength and Protection; He that judges the world will be sure to judge for them, when at any time they are injured or distressed; *He will be a refuge for the oppressed*; a high place, a strong place, for the oppressed, in time of trouble. II.

10. They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee. Faith is an intelligent grace; though there can be knowledge without faith, yet there can be no faith without knowledge. Knowledge must carry the torch before faith (2 Tim. 1: 12). "For I know whom I have believed." As in Paul's conversion a light from heaven "shined round

about him," so before faith be wrought, God shines in with a light upon the understanding.

Watson.—The better God is known, the more He is trusted. Those who know Him to be a God of infinite wisdom will trust Him *farther than they can see Him* (Job 35: 14); those who know Him to be a God of almighty power will trust Him when creature confidences fail, and they have nothing else to trust to (2 Chr. 20: 12); and those who know Him to be a God of infinite grace and goodness will trust Him, *though He slay them* (Job 13: 15). Those who know Him to be a God of inviolable truth and faithfulness will rejoice in His word of promise, and rest upon that, though the performance be deferred, and intermediate providences seem to contradict it. Those who know Him to be the Father of spirits, and an everlasting Father, will trust Him with their souls as their main care, and trust in Him at all times, even to the end. H.

The sufferer cannot be consoled until he finds that God is his friend; he cannot find this without faith; and in this manner, most directly, chastisement awakens the exercise of this grace, with great and unspeakable satisfaction. And thus the tribulations which have succeeded one another through life give us stronger and stronger reliance on God, for the approaching hour of death. At some future day it will be sweet to remember how the Lord sealed us with His Spirit of adoption in these times of trial J. W. A.

12. The general import of the verse is that God's judgments, though deferred, are not abandoned, that He does not forget even what He seems to disregard, and that sooner or later He will certainly appear as an avenger. Murder is here put, as the highest crime against the person, for all others, and indeed for wickedness in general. A.

Requireth, or "maketh inquisition for blood," i.e., "demandeth satisfaction for bloodshed." This is God's character, as opposed to the scoff of the wicked, "He *requireth* not," 10: 4, 13 (where the same verb is used). Like the Goël, the next of kin, who was bound to avenge the murder of his kinsman, so God *calls* the murderer *to account*, *requires satisfaction* at his hand. P.—In Gen. 9: 5, 6, are the same leading words. Making "inquisition for blood" is there "requiring" the murderer's blood for the blood he has shed. By "the humble" is meant the *defenceless*, upon whom the strong come down with cruel, bloody hands. Their cry God accounts it at once His duty and His glory to hear and avenge. C.

13, 14. Gates. The most public place of concourse, this being in the East what the market-place was to the Greeks, and the *forum* to the Romans. P.—The gates here mentioned are contrasted with those of the preceding verse. The God who saves him from the gates of death shall be praised for this deliverance in the gates of the daughter of Zion. A.—The gates of the daughter of Zion, which are above the earth, are set over against the under-world gates of death. “In the gates of the daughter of Zion” is equivalent to “before all the people of God;” for the gates are the places where people gather together and engage in discussion. The sacred Scriptures of the Old Testament as yet know nothing of hymns of praise sung by the blessed in heaven. On the other side of the grave is silent death. If the Church is to praise, she must live and not die. D.

15. As usual, God makes man’s wrath react to His own praise. Foiling the wicked in their plans, He turns back their wicked endeavors upon their own head. The figure is taken from the pits dug to catch wild animals. The wicked dig such pits to ensnare and destroy the righteous; God brings their own feet into these snares. C.—Drunkards kill themselves; prodigals beggar themselves; the contentious bring mischief upon themselves; and thus men’s sins may be read in their punishment, and it becomes visible to all that the destruction of sinners is not only meritoriously, but efficiently, of themselves, which will fill them with the utmost confusion. H.—As they cannot lay by their life and being, though then they would account annihilation a singular mercy, so neither can they lay aside any part of their being. Understanding, conscience, affections, memory, must all live to torment them, which should have helped to their happiness. *Baxter.*

16. *The Lord is known,* He makes Himself known, by these judgments which He executes. It is known that there is a God who judges in the earth; that He is a righteous God, and one that hates sin, and will punish it. In these judgments, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. H.—*The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.* Not only do we read it in the Word of God, but all history records the same righteous justice of God in snaring the wicked in the work of their own hands. Perhaps the most striking instance on record, next to Haman on his own gallows, is one connected with the horrors of the French Revolution, in

which we are told that, “within nine months of the death of the queen, Marie Antoinette, by the guillotine, every one implicated in her untimely end, her accusers, the judges, the jury, the prosecutors, the witnesses—all, every one at least whose fate is known, perished by the same instrument as their innocent victim.” “In the net which they had laid for her was their own foot taken—into the pit which they digged for her did they themselves fall.” *Bouchier.*

17. Must return. Not “*be turned.*” The biblical idea is that of a returning to the dust, taken from the original passage in Gen. 3:19. Cf. Job 30:23, of a return to Sheol (*i.e.*, Hades, the unseen world), as here and Psalm 90:3: “Thou makest man return to destruction,” expressions only to be explained by the dimness which then hung over the grave and the life beyond it. The meaning is, that even now, before the eyes of men, God’s righteousness shall be seen in cutting off the wicked by a sudden and premature end, and helping and exalting the righteous. P.

All the nations that forget God. Forget God and therefore live as if there were no God—forget God, and therefore have no faith in a just retribution for sin and no fear of it; forget God, and therefore spurn His law and trample down the rights of our common humanity: all such must have their doom, first as nations in the retributions of time; then as individuals in the more just—the perfectly just and complete retributions of eternity! C.

Apart from clear acts of great and grievous sin, how is God forgotten, clean forgotten, by the great part of mankind! They live as if there were no God. It is not as if they openly rebelled against Him. They pass Him over and ignore Him. He is an inconvenience in His own world, an impertinence in His own creation. So He has been quietly set on one side, as if He were an idol out of fashion and in the way. Men of science and politicians have agreed on this, and men of business and wealth think it altogether the most decent thing to be silent about God; for it is difficult to speak of Him, or have a view of Him, without allowing too much to Him. F. W. R.—Forgetfulness of God implies that a man doth neither esteem nor value the all-sufficiency and holiness of God as his happiness and portion, as his strength and support; nor doth he fear Him, nor live in subjection to His laws and commands as His rule; nor doth he aim at the glory of God as his end. To exclude God out of our thoughts and not to let Him have a place there, not to mind nor think upon God, is the greatest wickedness of

the thoughts that can be. And though you cannot say of such a one he will swear, cozen or oppress; yet if you can say he will forget God, or that he lives all his days never minding nor thinking upon God, you say enough to speak him under wrath and without remedy. *Howe.*

Higgaion, meditation. *Selah*, pause. God has revealed Himself as present and attentive, notwithstanding His apparent oblivion and inaction, by doing justice on His enemies, or rather by making them do justice on themselves, converting their devices against others into means of self-destruction. In view of this most striking attestation of God's providential government, the reader is summoned to reflect, and enabled so to do by a significant and solemn pause. The sense of meditation or reflection is clear from Psalm 19 : 14 and Lam. 3 : 62. The addition of *Higgaion* to *Selah* here confirms the explanation already given of the latter word. With this understanding of the terms, we may well say, to ourselves or others, in view of every signal providential retribution, especially where sin is conspicuously made its own avenger, *Higgaion Selah!* A.

18. For the needy shall not alway be forgotten. This is a sweet promise for a thousand occasions, and when pleaded before the throne in His name who comprehends in Himself every promise and is indeed Himself the great promise of the Bible, it would be found like all others, yea and amen. *R. Hawker.*—The needy may think themselves and others may think them forgotten for a while; their expectation of help from God may seem to have perished, and to have been forever frustrated; but he that believes does not make haste; the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak; we may build upon it as undoubtedly true that God's people shall not always be forgotten, nor shall they be disappointed of their hopes from the promise. God will not only remember them at last, but will make it

appear that He never did forget them. H.—God causeth us by delay to make the more prayers; and the more we pray, the longer we stay, the more comfort we shall have, and the more sure we are that we shall have it in the latter end. Distinguish between denying and delaying. In God *our Father* are all dimensions of love and that in an infinite degree; infinitely infinite: what if He defer us? so do we our children, albeit we mean no other but to give them, yet we love to see them wait, that so they may have from us the best things, when they are at the best, in the best time, and in the best manner; if a mother should forget her only boy, yet God hath an infinite memory; He nor can nor will forget us; the expectation of the *waiter* shall not fail *forever*—that is, *never*. *R. Capel.*

19, 20. To be judged, in the case of the wicked, is of course to be condemned. To be judged in God's presence, or at His tribunal, is of course to be condemned without appeal. A.—*Put them in fear, O Lord* (v. 20); strike a terror upon them, make them afraid with Thy judgments. God knows how to make the strongest and stoutest of men to tremble and to flee when none pursues; and thereby He makes them know and own that they are but men; they are but weak men, unable to stand before the holy God; sinful men, the guilt of whose consciences makes them subject to alarms. It is much for the glory of God, and the peace and welfare of the universe, that men should know and consider themselves to be but men, depending creatures, mutable, mortal, and accountable. H.—Crowns leave their wearers *but men*, degrees of eminent learning make their owners not more than *men*, valor and conquest cannot elevate beyond the dead level of "*but men*;" and all the wealth of Croesus, the wisdom of Solon, the power of Alexander, the eloquence of Demosthenes, if added together, would leave the possessor but a man. S.

PSALM X.

- 1 WHY standest thou afar off, O LORD?
Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?
- 2 In the pride of the wicked the poor is hotly pursued;
Let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.

- 3 For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire,
And the covetous renounceth, *yea*, contemneth the LORD.
- 4 The wicked, in the pride of his countenance,
saith, He will not require it.
All his thoughts are, There is no God.

- 5 His ways are firm at all times ;
Thy judgments are far above out of his sight :
As for all his adversaries, he puffeth at them.
- 6 He saith in his heart, I shall not be moved :
To all generations I shall not be in adversity.
- 7 His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and oppression :
Under his tongue is mischief and iniquity.
- 8 He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages :
In the covert places doth he murder the innocent :
His eyes are privily set against the helpless.
- 9 He lurketh in the covert as a lion in his den :
He lieth in wait to catch the poor :
He doth catch the poor, when he draweth him in his net.
- 10 He croucheth, he boweth down,
And the helpless fall by his strong ones.
- 11 He saith in his heart, God hath forgotten :
He hideth his face ; he will never see it.

- 12 Arise, O LORD ; O God, lift up thine hand :
Forget not the poor.
- 13 Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God,
And say in his heart, Thou wilt not require it ?
- 14 Thou hast seen *it* ; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to take it into thy hand :
The helpless committeth *himself* unto thee ;
Thou hast been the helper of the fatherless.
- 15 Break thou the arm of the wicked ;
And as for the evil man, seek out his wickedness till thou find none.
- 16 The LORD is King for ever and ever :
The nations are perished out of his land.
- 17 LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the meek :
Thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear :
- 18 To judge the fatherless and the oppressed,
That man which is of the earth may be terrible no more.

THE Psalmist calls upon God to chastise the unbridled insolence and scorn of the wicked. These have reached such a pitch that it seems as if God winked at evil. Men are not only doing wickedness, but boasting of their wickedness ; and, finding that justice does not overtake them, are acting as if in the conviction that there is no God. The prosperity (v. 5), security (v. 6), insolence (vs. 4, 11), deceit (v. 7), and violence (vs. 8-10) of these despisers of God is vividly portrayed. The Psalm concludes with the triumphant assertion of faith, that despite all seeming disorders, *Jehovah is King*, and that He does hear and answer the cry of the oppressed. It is impossible to say to what period of Jewish history the Psalm is to be referred. The state of society which it supposes is peculiar. The violent oppressors belonged apparently to heathen nations, who had not yet been finally driven out of the land, but whose speedy destruction the poet anticipates (v. 16). P.

1. The Psalm begins with the plaintive inquiry, why *Jehovah* delays to deliver His oppressed ones. It is not captious murmuring that is expressed in the question, but an earnest longing that God would not delay to act in such a manner as His nature and His promise demand. D.—This expostulation betrays no defect either of reverence or faith, but, on the contrary, indicates a firm belief that God is able, and must be willing, to deliver His own people. Such demands are never uttered either by scepticism or despair. A.

3, 4. Quite a new turn has been given by the Revisers to the thought in this difficult Psalm, in a number of instances, and greatly to its advantage in clearness and force. The necessity for such changes had long been felt by scholars, and now that they are made, they will commend themselves to all as at least suitable to their connection. It is not said of the wicked that he “blesseth the covetous *whom* the Lord abhorreth ;” but as the parallelism requires, he is put on a level with the covetous, and it is declared of him that he “renounceth, *yea*, contemneth the Lord.” And so in the following verse, which carries on the same thought, we read in the Revision, “The wicked in the pride of his countenance *saith*, He will not require it. All his thoughts are, There is no God.” E. C. B.

3. Boasteth of his heart's desire. Every Christless life, whatsoever the superficial differences in it, is really a life shaped according to and under the influence of *passionate desires*. Given the immense varieties of tastes and likings and desires which men have, the point and characteristic feature of every godless life is that, be these what they may, they become the dominant power in that life. The sway and tyranny of such lusts and desires may be sometimes broken by remonstrances of conscience ; sometimes suppressed by considerations of prudence ; sometimes by habit, by business, by circumstances that force people into channels into which they would not naturally let their lives run. And often and often in such

a life there may be a dim desire for something better. But apart from Christ it is not conscience that rules our lives ; apart from Christ it is not sense of duty that is strongest ; apart from Christ the real directing impulse to which the inward proclivities, if not the outward activities, do yield in the main and on the whole, is the things that we like, the passionate desires of nature, the sensuous and godless heart. A. M.

In themselves, impulsion, desire, appetite, have no moral character, but the man who gives himself up to the control of any one of these has a moral character. He lays aside his true manhood. He debases himself. Outwardly he may do nothing unseemly, but he permits that to rule which ought to serve. He falls into bondage, and nothing but favoring outward circumstances, or an amiable temper, or a selfish prudence, can stand between him and any crime. This bondage may assume a great variety of forms, and be more or less inveterate and debasing, but in every form it is bondage, and more to be dreaded than that which is physical. We call it bondage, and it is so. It is an unnatural position, a degradation. Let the spiritual nature with its powers of comprehension abdicate its seat and work in subjection to the lower and blind nature of appetency and impulsion, and the broad wisdom appropriate to that nature degenerates into the cunning of the serpent. Intellectual power becomes a curse, and instead of holding his erect position and communing with the heavens, the man, that which is distinctively so, goes upon his belly and eats dust. In this bondage there is no trouble or sacrifice of self-denial, for the higher nature, in whose behalf alone self-denial is possible, is set aside. If we add to this the blindness and paralysis that come upon the spiritual powers when they are thus ignored and abused, the light that is within us becoming darkness, we shall not wonder that it is so seldom, if ever, that any one who has come under the power of this bondage breaks away from it of his own accord, or by his own strength. M. H.

The desires are meant to be impelling powers. It is absurdity and the destruction of true manhood to make them, as we so often do, directing powers, and to put the reins into their hand. They are the wind, not the helm ; the steam, not the driver. Let us keep things in their right places. Remember that the constitution of human nature, as God has meant it, is this : down there, under hatches, under control, the strong impulses ; above them, the enlightened

understanding ; above that, the conscience—that has a loftier region than that of thought to move in, the moral region ; and above that, the God, whose face, shining down upon the apex of the nature thus constituted, irradiates it with light which filters through all the darkness, down to the very base of the being ; and sanctifies the animal, and subdues the impulses, and enlightens the understandings, and calms and quickens the conscience, and makes ductile and pliable the will, and fills the heart with fruition and tranquillity, and orders the life after the image of Him that created it. A. M.

4. The pride of his countenance. Pride is the undermost and original vice of all. It is base because at its best it cannot but imply that the eyes look downward only and have never been raised above their own measure ; for there is not a man so lofty in his standing or capacity but he must be humble in perceiving what infinity there is of things he cannot know, nor even reach unto, as it stands compared with that little body of things he can reach, and of which nevertheless he can altogether understand not one ; not to speak of that wicked and fond attributing of such excellency as he may have to himself and thinking of it as his own getting, which is the real essence and criminality of pride ; nor of those viler forms of it founded on false estimation of things beneath us and irrational contempt of them. *Ruskin.*

Thoughts. The noun properly means *schemes, devices*, rather than *thoughts*. The whole of his conduct, all his purposes and plans are carried on as if there were no God—in a practical denial of His existence. P.—A personal God would disturb the ungodly in his doings ; he therefore prefers to deny His existence, and thinks : there is only a fate, and that is blind ; an absolute, and that has no eyes ; an idea, and that cannot intervene in the affairs of men. D.

Among a numerous and increasing class of the higher and middle ranks there is an inward withdrawing from the life and personal being of God, a turning of the thoughts exclusively to the so-called physical attributes, to the Omnipresence in the counterfeit form of Ubiquity, to the Immensity, the Infinity, the Immutability, the attributes of space, with a notion of Power as their substratum ; a *Fate*, in short, not a Moral Creator and Governor ! Let intelligence be imagined, and wherein does the conception of God differ essentially from that of gravitation (conceived as the cause of gravity) in the understanding of those who represent

the Deity not only as a necessary, but as a *necessitated* being? those for whom Justice is but a scheme of general laws, and Holiness and the Divine hatred of sin, yea, and Sin itself, are words without meaning, or mere accommodations to a rude and barbarous race! S. T. C.

What a wretched condition hath sin brought man unto, that the great God who "fillethe heaven and earth" should yet have no place in the heart which He hath especially made for Himself! The sun is not so clear as this truth, that God is, for all things in the world are because God is. If He were not, nothing could be. It is from Him that wicked men have that strength they have to commit sin, therefore sin proceeds from atheism, especially these plotting sins; for if God were more thought on, He would take off the soul from sinful contrivings, and fix it upon Himself. *Sibbes*.—All their thought is, that there is no God. This is there made the bottom, the foundation, the groundwork and reason of all their wicked plots and injurious projects, and deceitful carriages and proceedings, that seeing there is no God or power above them to take notice of it, to regard or requite them, therefore they may be bold to go on. *T. Goodwin*.

5. The Chaldee paraphrase, the cognate dialects, and the analogy of Job 20 : 21, are in favor of the rendering, *his ways are strong, i.e., his fortunes are secure, his life is prosperous*, which moreover agrees best with the remainder of the verse, as a description of the sinner's outward state. Thus understood, the second clause describes him as untouched or unaffected by God's providential judgments, and the third as easily ridding himself of all his human adversaries. Both together represent him as impregnable on all sides, in appearance equally beyond the reach of God and man. As this immunity from danger, strictly understood, could exist only in appearance, the whole verse may be regarded as an expression of the sinner's own opinion rather than his true condition.

6. *He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved; to generation and generation* (I am one), *who* (shall) *not* (be) *in evil, or in evil case, i.e., in trouble, in distress*. This is a natural expression of the proud security engendered in the natural man by great prosperity. *He hath said*, implying that the cause has already been in operation long enough to show its natural effect. *In his heart*, to himself, in a spirit of self-gratulation and self-confidence. *To age and age*, throughout all ages or all generations. The strength of this expression shows that the speaker is not a real person, but the ideal type

of a whole class. The sinner who thus says in his heart is not the sinner of one period or country, but the sinner of all times and places. The form of the last clause in Hebrew is peculiar and emphatic. He says, *I shall never be in evil or adversity*, as if the very supposition of such a contingency would be not only groundless but absurd in *his* case. There could scarcely be a stronger expression of the self-relying spirit of the sinner, as contrasted with the saints' implicit confidence in God's will and power, not only to preserve him from falling, but to raise him when he does fall. A.

6-9. He proudly sets trouble at defiance, and is confident of the continuance of his own prosperity. *He had said in his heart*, and pleased himself with the thought, *I shall not be moved; my goods are laid up for many years, and I shall never be in adversity*. Those are nearest ruin who thus set it furthest from them, v. 6. *His mouth is full of cursing*. Those he cannot do a real mischief to, yet he will spit his venom at, and breathe out the slaughter which he cannot execute. Thus have God's faithful worshippers been anathematized and cursed with bell, book, and candle. Where there is a heart full of malice, there is commonly a mouth full of curses. He is false and treacherous. He cares not what lies he tells, what oaths he breaks, nor what arts of dissimulation he uses to compass his ends, v. 7. His malice is against the innocent, who never provoked him; against the poor, who cannot resist, and over whom it will be no glory to triumph. Those are perfectly lost to all honesty and honor, against whose mischievous designs neither innocence nor poverty will be any man's security. Those that have power ought to protect the innocent and provide for the poor, vs. 8, 9. H.

8. "*He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor.*" All this strength of metaphor and imagery is intended to mark the assiduity, the cunning, the artifice, to which the enemies of truth and righteousness will often resort in order to accomplish their corrupt and vicious designs. The great powers which have oppressed the Church of Christ in different ages have answered to this description. They have sat in ambush for the poor of Christ's flock; they have adopted every stratagem that infernal skill could invent; and all for the vain purpose of attempting to blot out a "name which shall endure forever, and which shall be continued as long as the sun." *Morison*.

Consider the persecutions of the good; fires

for the saints of all ages, dungeons for the friends of liberty and benefactors of their times. What does it mean? What face shall we put on this outstanding demonstration of the world? No other but this, that cursing and bitterness, the poison even of asps, and more, is entered into the heart of man. He hates with a diabolical hatred. Feeling "how awful goodness is," the sight of it rouses him to madness, and he will not stop till he has tasted blood. And what a being is this that can be stung with so great madness, by the spectacle of a good and holy life. The fiercest of animals are capable of no such devilish instigation; because they are too low to be capable of goodness, or even of the thought. But here is a creature who cannot bear the reminder, even of good, or of anything above the ruin where his desolated glory lies. Oh, how great is the nature which is capable of this dire frenzy! H. B.

11. *He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten, He hath hidden His face, He hath not seen, doth not see, and will not see, forever.* The opening words are the same, and have the same sense, as in v. 6 above. The three parallel clauses which follow all express the same idea—namely, that God takes no note of human offences. This is first expressed by the figure of forgetfulness; then by that of deliberately refusing to see; then by a literal and direct affirmation that He does not see, either the sufferings of His people or the malice of their enemies; and that this is not a transient or occasional neglect, but one likely to continue forever. A.—As God's foreknowledge extends to all acts that shall be done, so His remembrance extends to all acts that have been done. We may as well say, God foreknows nothing that shall be done to the end of the world, as that He forgets anything that hath been done from the beginning of the world. Charnock.

13. *Wherefore doth the wicked condemn God, and say in his heart, Thou wilt not require it?* Insensibility to God's retributive providence leads to a denial of the same; and thence a denial of the truth of a future judgment; and thence a contempt of all human restraints and penalties, if by any act of power or lying they may be evaded. The whole of this Psalm is, in fact, an argument that not mere atheism, but a disbelief in future punishment, would break up all the foundations of social morality, and set men in a wild and savage freedom of "cursing and deceit and fraud." Take away the idea of a God, whose providence is personal, superintending and retributive, and you leave nothing for restraint but a present low expedi-

ency—nothing but self-interest in the present life, which, if there were no God, would be impossible to be demonstrated as on the side of virtue. Cheever.

Because the Lord continues to spare them, therefore they go on to provoke Him. As He adds to their lives, so they add to their lusts. Because justice delays punishment, they imagine she denies to punish them; because she does not always reprove them for their sins, they suppose He always approves of their sins. But let such know that the silent arrow can destroy as well as the roaring cannon. Though the patience of God be *lasting*, yet it is not *everlasting*. W. Secker.

14. Thou hast seen it. An emphatic, energetic protest against the words immediately preceding, and also with a reference to the "He will never see" (v. 11), throwing back the word in the mouth of the wicked. There is a time coming, he feels assured, when all this disorder will be set right. God is not the passive spectator of human affairs which these men deem Him. He "considers" (*i e.*, regards with interest and sympathy) what is going on. The helpless, therefore, may leave all to God—and with the more confidence, because God *has been* the helper of those who, like the orphan, are deprived of human protectors. This appeal to past experience is always a ground of confidence. The road we are now travelling may be very dark; but let us look back, and on some spot which we have passed we shall see the light shining. P.

"*Thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with Thy hand.*" God is all-eye to see, and all-hand to punish His enemies. From Divine oversight there is no hiding, and from Divine justice there is no fleeing. Wanton mischief shall meet with woful misery, and those who harbor spite shall inherit sorrow. Verily there is a God which judgeth in the earth. Nor is this the only instance of the presence of God in the world; for while He chastises the oppressor, He befriends the oppressed. S.—Let the persecuted encourage themselves with a well-grounded faith, not only that Thou hast seen it, but that Thou dost behold all the mischief that is done by the hands, and all the spite and malice that lurk in the hearts of these oppressors; it is all known to Thee, and observed by Thee; nay, not only Thou hast seen it, and dost behold it, but Thou wilt requite it, wilt recompense it into their bosoms, by Thy just and avenging hand. H.

"*Thou art the helper of the fatherless.*" God doth exercise a more special providence over

men in miserable circumstances ; and therefore among His other titles this is one, to be a "*Helper of the fatherless.*" It is the argument the Church used to express her return to God ; Hos. 14 : 3, "For in Thee the fatherless find mercy." What greater comfort is there than this, that there is One presides in the world who is so wise He cannot be mistaken, so faithful He cannot deceive, so pitiful He cannot neglect His people, and so powerful that He can make stones even to be turned into bread if He please ! God doth not govern the world only by His will as an absolute monarch, but by His wisdom and goodness as a tender father. It is not His greatest pleasure to show His sovereign power or His inconceivable wisdom, but His immense goodness, to which He makes the other attributes subservient. *Charnock.*

16. *Jehovah (is) king !* He is not dethroned, as His enemies imagine ; He is still king, and will so remain, *perpetuity and eternity*, forever and ever. *Lost*, perished, *are nations*, the heathen, *i.e.*, hostile nations, *from*, out of *His land*, the Holy Land, the Land of Israel, the land of which He is the king in a peculiar sense, distinct from that of providential ruler. The Psalmist sees Jehovah still enthroned, not only as the sovereign of the world, but of His people. A.

16-18. The triumph of faith, which, knowing that Jehovah is King, already sees by anticipation His righteous judgment executed. The bold plunderers who have so long infested the land are already swept away, says the singer, so sure is he of the issue. The land, which is Jehovah's land, must "be purged of all evil-doers," as once of the Canaanites, who were driven out. Israel may be "mightily oppressed," as by Sisera of old ; but God will hear his cry, and give strength to his trembling heart (v. 17), and so manifest His power that these tyrants who, with all their boasting, are but weak mortal men (v. 18), shall no longer oppress His people. P.

17. The desire of the meek. Prayer is the offering up of our desires to God in the name of Christ, for such things as are agreeable to His will. It is an offering of our *desires*. Desires are the soul and life of prayer ; words are but the body ; now as the body without the soul is dead, so are prayers unless they are animated with our desires : "*Lord, Thou hast*

heard the desire of the humble." God heareth not words, but *desires*. T. Watson.

Notice the logic of this verse. It is simple, forcible, accurate logic. It runs thus : "Thou hast," "Thou wilt." "Lord, *Thou hast* heard the desire of the meek : *Thou wilt* prepare their heart." And the same blessed logic is carried a step further ; for you read, "Thou wilt," and then again, "Thou wilt" : "Thou wilt prepare their heart, Thou wilt cause Thine ear to hear." Faith first of all concludes that God will bless because of former blessings, and then she is so sure of her conclusion that upon it she is prepared to build up a further confidence. She expects because she has experienced, and experiences already what she expects. Join these two sentences together in your minds : "Thou wilt prepare their heart : Thou wilt cause Thine ear to hear." S.—God first prepares the heart of His people, and then gives them an answer of peace ; nor may we expect His gracious answer but in this way ; so that God's working *upon* us is the best earnest of His working *for* us. He prepares the heart for prayer by kindling holy desires and strengthening our most holy faith, fixing the thoughts, and raising the affections, and then He graciously accepts the prayer ; He prepares the heart for the mercy itself that is wanting and prayed for ; makes us fit to receive it and use it well, and then gives it unto us. The preparation of the heart is from the Lord, and we must seek unto Him for it (Prov. 16 : 1). H.

Faith is the very life of prayer, whence springs hope and comfort with it, to uphold the soul and keep it steady under storms with the promises : and, as Aaron and Hur to Moses, keeping it from fainting, strengthening the hands when they would begin to fail. Such is the force of this *preparing of the heart*, which God gives as an assurance and pledge of His *inclining His ear to hear*. It signifies the *establishing of the heart*, as that indeed is a main point of its preparedness for prayer. L.

18. The sense here is, that weak and short-lived man shall not continue to insult and defy Almighty God. It implies a wish or prayer, but is in form a strong expression of the Psalmist's confident assurance that it will be so, and in connection with the similar expressions of the two preceding verses, forms a worthy and appropriate close of the entire composition. A.

PSALM XI.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN. A PSALM OF DAVID.

- 1 IN the LORD put I my trust :
 How say ye to my soul,
 Flee *as* a bird to your mountain ?
- 2 For, lo, the wicked bend the bow,
 They make ready their arrow upon the string,
 That they may shoot in darkness at the up-
 right in heart.
- 3 If the foundations be destroyed,
 What can the righteous do ?
- 4 The LORD is in his holy temple,
 The LORD, his throne is in heaven ;

- His eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children
 of men.
- 5 The LORD trieth [*proveth*] the righteous :
 But the wicked and him that loveth violence
 his soul hateth.
- 6 Upon the wicked he shall rain snares ;
 Fire and brimstone and burning wind shall
 be the portion of their cup.
- 7 For the LORD is righteous ; he loveth right-
 eousness [*righteous deeds*] ;
 The upright shall behold his face.

THE singer is in danger of his life ; and timorous, faint-hearted counsellors would fain persuade him to seek safety in flight. But, full of unshaken faith in God, he rejects their counsel, believing that Jehovah, the righteous King, though He tries His servants, does not forsake them. Not the righteous, but the wicked have need to fear. The Psalm is so short and so general in its character that it is not easy to say to what circumstances in David's life it should be referred. P.

1-3. David rejects the counsel of his friends to save his life by flight. Hidden in Jehovah, he needs no other refuge. However well meant and well grounded the counsel is, he finds it too timid, and sees himself raised in God above the necessity of following it. D.

1. *In Jehovah*—under the shadow of His wings—*have I found refuge* ; I need no other refuge : how *can* ye say to me, etc. ; my feet are on the true rock, why should I look elsewhere for safety ? This is the full force of the expression. There is moreover a force in the perfect, “*I have found.*” It is an exclamation of joyful confidence in the thought that he *has* such a refuge ; it is not yet to seek. The advice here given, and which he repels, is that of timid and desponding friends, who would persuade him that all is lost, and that the highest wisdom is to yield to circumstances, and to seek safety not in resistance, but in flight. But in fact the voice which thus speaks is the voice of the natural heart, of the selfish and therefore short-sighted and cowardly instinct, which always asks first not what is right, but what is safe. The advice may be well meant, but it is unworthy. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. But it is

often a sorer trial for faith to have to withstand the pleadings of well-meaning friends than to arm itself against open enemies.

3. A further reason for the adoption of a timid policy. All is in hopeless disorder and confusion. The foundations, or “pillars,” are the principles of law and order which were now subverted. P.—The pillars or foundations are those of social order or society itself. These are said to be destroyed, when truth and righteousness prevail no longer, but the intercourse of men is governed by mere selfishness. The question in the last clause implies that the righteous has effected nothing, in opposition to the prevalent iniquity. The past tense represents this as a matter of actual experience, but as one which still continues. The true relation of the tenses is correctly given in the Prayer-Book version. *For the foundations will be cast down, and what hath the righteous done?* A.

True foundations : God is God, before all things preordaining, revolving within Himself and all things else, as He pleases, the great foundation given to Moses in the bush—“*I am !*” This good God has given us a revelation. We can prove it by every evidence : the *external* evidence—prophecy ; the *internal* evidence—the harmony ; the *experimental* evidence—what it has been to many, and what it is to me. In the revelation there is shown a way—the only way—by which a just God can forgive a sinner. He has found and accepted a Substitute who outweighs the whole world—His own Son. To communicate this thought and to give this faith, there is a Holy Ghost, Himself also God ; and He being spirit, works in the spirit of a man, and creates in his heart trust and love toward Jesus Christ. As soon as by

that Spirit a man really trusts, as a sinner, in Christ, he is united to Christ. God sees him in Christ, and in Christ God sees him righteous. By the same union, and through the operation of the Holy Ghost, that man, now a living member in Christ, has a motive sufficient to change his whole life and to make him do all good works. God, inspiration, Christ, the Holy Ghost, faith, good works—these are the foundations. There is nothing in the world so sure as a believer's foundation. As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more, but the righteous is an everlasting foundation. J. V.

4-7. The answer of faith, the glance directed from earth to heaven, the full trust in the righteous and all-seeing Lord, the confidence that whatever the apparent confusion and disorder of the lower world, there is an eye that sees and a hand that directs all, that even the suffering of the righteous is part of a Divine purpose of love. P.—The discourse of the counsellors who are afraid for David is now ended. He justifies the confidence in God with which he began his hymn. Above all that takes place upon earth, and disheartens those who are of little faith, Jehovah is enthroned. Above the earth are the heavens, and in heaven stands the throne of Jehovah, the King of kings. And this heavenly temple, this heavenly palace, is the place whence comes the ultimate decision of all earthly things. Men, righteous and unrighteous, lie open to the eyes of Jehovah, which see through everything, and to His glances, which search everything through and through. He tries the righteous, *i.e.*, seeing into the depths of his soul, He recognizes that his inmost nature is righteous and able to stand the test, and therefore He lovingly protects him, just as the righteous lovingly adheres to Him. The wicked, however, and him that loves the violence done by the stronger to those who are weaker, His soul hates, *i.e.*, He hates him with all the energy of His holy nature. The more intense this hatred is, so much the more fearful will be the judgments in which it discharges itself. D.

4. The Psalmist, saddened by the breaking down of those supports on which he had relied, turns as by instinct to the sublime and consoling truth that God is in His holy temple, Jehovah's throne is in heaven, His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men. *There He* reigns in absolute life, with unwasting powers. The eternal mountains may disappear; the firmest human works may vanish, like a dream of the night, but His throne is *settled forever* in heaven. Solitary, helpless as I am, I

may turn to Him, whose love is as undecaying as His throne; who has made me in His own image, and therefore cannot despise my prayer; who reigns for the very purpose of doing good; from whom life and happiness flow in ceaseless currents. His Church on earth, when beset with enemies and obstacles apparently invincible, is awakened by that very experience to look to Him whose eyes behold her with inexpressible complacency, whose providence in its ample range comprehends the *evil* as well as the good, and with the same ease abates the one and prospers the other. B. B. E.

The Lord has not only His residence, but His throne, in heaven, and He has *set the dominion thereof in the earth* (Job 38 : 33); for, having *prepared His throne in the heavens, His kingdom ruleth over all* (103 : 19). Hence *the heavens* are said *to rule* (Dan. 4 : 26). Let us by faith see God on His throne; on His throne of glory, infinitely transcending the splendor and majesty of earthly princes; on His throne of government, giving law, giving motion, and giving aim, to all the creatures; on His throne of judgment, rendering to every man according to his works; and on His throne of grace, to which His people may come boldly for mercy and grace; we shall then see no reason to be discouraged by the pride and power of oppressors, or any of the afflictions that attend the righteous. H.—Though justice, faith, and truth may seem to have fled from the earth, Jehovah will never suffer the boundaries which separate right from wrong to be effaced. He continues holy and unchangeable on His heavenly throne, and is able in a moment to reverse the most desperate condition of His servants. Anon.

His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men; He not only sees them, but He sees through them; not only knows all they say and do, but knows what they think, what they design, and how they really stand affected, whatever they pretend. We may know what men *seem* to be, but He knows what they *are*, as the refiner knows what the value of the gold is when he has tried it. God is said to try *with His eyes*, and *His eyelids*, because He knows men, not as earthly princes know men, by report and representation, but by His own strict inspection, which cannot err or be imposed upon. This may comfort us when we are deceived in men, even in men that we think we have tried, that God's judgment of men, we are sure, is according to truth. H.—Of one thing we may be certain: the infinitely holy and omniscient Judge takes cognizance of what

passes in human minds. He cannot look with indifference on the thoughts, imaginations, wishes, purposes, choices and habits of our souls. Slightly as we regard them, each has its moral estimate in God's account. And this gives a serious importance to inward things, which, if duly pondered, might modify our whole view of life. J. W. A.—God sees each man as perfectly as if there were no other creature in the universe. He sees us always; He sees us entirely, reading the recesses of the soul as readily as the glancings of the eye. Is not this a sufficient ground of confidence, and an abundant answer to the solicitations of despondency? S.

5. *Jehovah the righteous will prove, will prove the righteous, and the wicked and the lover of violence his soul hates.* The sentence might also be divided thus: *Jehovah will prove the righteous and the wicked, and the lover of violence his soul hates.* A.—**Trieth.** The same verb as in the previous verse, but used here in a more definite sense, with reference to the result of the trial, puts them into the furnace (the word is used of the testing of metals), that they may come forth as pure gold. P.—The Lord tries all the children of men that He may do them justice; but He tries the righteous that He may *do them good in their latter end* (Deut. 8:16). H.—They are precious to Him, and therefore He refines them with afflictions. None of the Lord's children may hope to escape from trial, nor, indeed, in our right minds, would any of us desire to do so, for trial is the channel of many blessings. S.

6. The figures in this verse are borrowed from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. David, who has just said that Jehovah abhors the wicked, thus places himself, as it were, on the Lord's side. Ewald reads "coals of fire," and arranges the clauses as follows:

"On the wicked he raineth coals of fire and
brimstone;
A burning wind is the portion of their
cup."

The first line gives, as he says, the image of a fiery rain from heaven, as in the overthrow from Sodom; the second, that of a poisonous Simoom, drunk in, as it were, from an envenomed cup. P.

Figures of speech these are, indeed, but figures of most fearful import! Their application to the wicked in the future world is not in the least softened and toned down by saying that these are only the judgments which God sends on wicked nations and cruel oppressors in the

present world. For if, despite of the necessary imperfections and the manifold limitations of judgment upon men in this world, such figures come from the lips of God to express it, what will be the unmitigated, the perfect retribution of the eternal world? What figures will ever be found adequate to measure that shoreless ocean of the sinner's woe? H. C.

Because I believe in a God of absolute and unbounded love, therefore I believe in a loving anger of His which will and must devour and destroy all which is decayed, monstrous, abortive in His universe, till all enemies shall be put under His feet, and God shall be all in all. C. Kingsley.—Place a God of love on a throne, and He becomes, He must become, a God of justice; His love compels Him to arm His right hand with vengeance, and to make the workers of iniquity feel its stroke. A governor who would treat alike vice and virtue could not reign long over one petty kingdom of the earth, could not rule a single parish of our own kingdom, no, nor a single house; how much less this huge world, a mighty universe, a crowded earth and an almost boundless heaven! C. Bradley.

The threatenings and rebukes, the acts of retributive judgment, which are contained in the revelation of God, are no limitation nor disturbance of the clear and happy faith that all which we behold is full of blessing, and that all comes from the Father's hand. They are the garb in which the Love needs to array itself when it comes in contact with man's sin and man's evil. The love of God appears no less when it teaches us in grave sad tones that "the wages of sin is death," than when it proclaims that "the gift of God is eternal life." Love threatens that it may never have to execute its threats. Love warns that we may be wise in time. Love prophesies that its sad forebodings may not be fulfilled. And love smites with lighter strokes of premonitory chastisements, that we may never need or feel "the whips of scorpions." A. M.

The justice which inflicts punishment is only benevolence in another form. And this it is that makes the infliction intolerable. How much more terrible to the wayward child are the blows inflicted by a weeping, affectionate father, than if received from an enemy! God is that affectionate Father; and He punishes only because He loves the universe more than the individual; and He has exhausted the stores of infinite mercy in vain to save him. Wicked men sometimes tell us that they are not afraid to trust themselves in the hands of infinite be-

nevolence ; whereas it is eminently this quality of the Divine character which, above all others, they have reason to fear. For if, even in this world of probation and hope, God finds it necessary to mingle so much severity with goodness, what but a cup of unmingled bitterness shall be put into his hands who goes into eternity unrenewed and unpardoned, and finds that even infinite benevolence has become his eternal enemy ! *E. Hitchcock.*

7. The concluding verse grounds the different bearing of God toward the righteous and the unrighteous, and the dismal fate of the latter, upon God's righteousness. Just as Jehovah Himself is righteous, so also both on His own part and on the part of man He loves deeds of righteousness. D.

The upright shall behold His face.

Not only does David make Jehovah his refuge in calamity, but he can rejoice in the thought that he shall behold the face of God—behold now the light of His countenance even in the midst of gloom and darkness. Did his hope reach beyond this, and are we to suppose that here he looks forward to seeing God in the resurrection ? We cannot tell. To us, however, his words may be the expression of a "hope full of immortality." P.—To enjoy this vision of God, this vision which is softened by love, is the highest honor which God in His grace can bestow upon a man ; it is the very blessedness reserved for the upright (140 : 13). It cannot be said that what is meant is a vision of God beyond the grave, but just as little can it be said that it is exclusively a vision on this side of it. To the Old Testament consciousness the future undoubtedly loses itself in the night of Sheol. Faith, however, broke through this night and trusted in a future intuition of God (Job 19 : 26). The New Testament redemption has realized this postulate of faith, inasmuch as the Redeemer, having broken through the night of the realm of the dead, has led up the saints of the Old Testament along with Himself, and has translated them into the sphere of the Divine love that is clearly revealed in heaven. D.

All the attributes ascribed to God—such as truthfulness, righteousness, omnipotence, om-

niscience, holiness—are essential elements of the highest and most *perfect personality*. Only a personal God can be thought of as a God of love, and as a good and holy God. He would not be God were He not personal. But we do not merely think of God. In worship and love we exalt ourselves to Him ; we pray to Him, we yield our whole being to Him, and in doing so we feel ourselves blessed. The relation of man to God is a personal one, and is experienced as such. We can worship, revere and love only a personal God, not the abstract ghost of the Absolute or of any unalterable Substance. Only the highest personal Being is worthy of the greatest affection ; only He can claim to be supreme and holy ; only a personal God can we trust ; only to a personal God, whose love and goodness we can understand, can we yield ourselves, and only when we commit ourselves to such a Being can we be exalted, comforted, and blessed. This is the decisive point ; all religious faith finds satisfaction only in the idea of a personal God. All Divine worship and reverence, all religion and all religious exaltation stand or fall with faith in a personal God. This faith is the essence of all religion, particularly of the Christian religion, which teaches us to apprehend God as a loving Father. Faith in a personal God is not in antagonism with experimental knowledge, but supplements it and completes our view of the universe and of life. Faith in a personal God is the vital element in all culture and progress, for all culture and progress ultimately spring from a healthy conception and realization of the eternal destiny of man, which destiny reveals the infinite value of life and gives to life its consecration and exaltation. *Sommer.*

God is the only happiness of a rational and immortal soul. The soul that was made for God can find no happiness but in God ; it came from God, and can never be happy but by returning to Him again and resting in Him. With Him for your portion, you have all : you have infinite wisdom to direct you, infinite knowledge to teach you, infinite mercy to pity and save you, infinite love to care for and comfort you, and infinite power to protect and keep you. *J. Mason.*

PSALM XII.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN ; SET TO THE SHEMINITH. A PSALM OF DAVID.

- 1 HELP, LORD ; for the godly man ceaseth ;
For the faithful fail from among the children
of men.
- 2 They speak vanity every one with his neighbour :
With flattering lip, and with a double heart,
do they speak.
- 3 The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips,
The tongue that speaketh great things :
- 4 Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail ;
Our lips are our own : who is lord over
us ?

- 5 For the spoiling of the poor, for the sighing
of the needy,
Now will I arise, saith the LORD ;
I will set him in safety at whom they puff.
- 6 The words of the LORD are pure words ,
As silver tried in a furnace on the earth,
Purified seven times.
- 7 Thou shalt keep them, O LORD,
Thou shalt preserve them from this generation
forever.
- 8 The wicked walk on every side,
When vileness is exalted among the sons of men.

THE Psalmist is evidently smarting from the falseness and hypocrisy of the time. The defection which he deplores is a national defection. Like Elijah in the deserts, he feels himself alone. "There is not one godly man left : the true-hearted are cut off." A taint has spread through society (to use the modern expression, for which the Hebrew poet says, "this generation"). Falsehood is everywhere, truth nowhere. The heart of men is double ; their lips are flattering lips (v. 3). And while they utter slander, hypocrisy, and lies, they boast of their power ; and not only give their tongues license, but justify the license : "Our lips are our own ; who is lord over us ?" Now this utter hollowness and insincerity are very hard to bear. The few who, in the midst of the general corruption, still retain their integrity are persecuted, and sigh for deliverance. This deliverance is promised them in the form of a Divine interposition. The singer, filled with the spirit of prophecy, consoles himself, and those afflicted like himself, not in his own words, but in the words of God (v. 6). And then, remembering how pure those words are, how unalterably true—not like the words of men which *seem* so fair, but *are* so false—he feels that there he can rest, calm in the conviction that, though the wicked walk on every side, Jehovah will save them that love Him from all their machinations (v. 8). Both the circumstances of the Psalmist and his prayer are very similar to what we find in the two immediately preceding Psalms. In Psalm 11 his belief as to the overthrow of the wicked is based upon God's *character* as a righteous God. In this Psalm it rests apparently upon a special

promise, but in fact upon God's *Word*. But God's Word teaches us what God's character is. The difference therefore is formal, not real. P.

1. The whole verse is a strong hyperbolical description of the small number of good men left in the community, and their consequent exposure to the malice of the wicked. Such expressions, as Luther well suggests, are too familiar in the dialect of common life to be mistaken or produce perplexity. A.

Ask the children of this world what it is, in their account, that makes the times bad ; they will tell you, Scarcity of money, decay of trade, and the desolations of war make the times bad ; but the Scripture lays the badness of the times upon causes of another nature. When there is a general decay of piety and honesty among men, the times are then truly bad. *When the godly man ceases, and the faithful fail.* Observe how these two characters are here put together, the *godly* and the *faithful*. As there is no true policy, so there is no true piety, without honesty. Godly men are *faithful* men, *fast* men, so they have sometimes been called ; their word is as confirming as their oath, as binding as their bond ; they make conscience of being true both to God and man. They are here said to *cease and fail*, either by death, or by desertion, or by both. H.

The godly man. That *only* is godliness which reveres and honors God in a way suited to that high and incommunicable character. Genuine piety expresseth itself thus : "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, O Lord ? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee." We are not *godly*, whatever we profess or seem,

if in our most deliberate and affectionate choice we do not prefer the one true God and the enjoyment of His favor to all that can be found throughout the wide extent of His works ; if we make not His will the measure of ours, His law the sovereign guide of our conduct, and His glory the ultimate end of our obedience. *R. Walker.*

2. *Vanity, i.e., falsehood, they will speak ;* as they now do, so will they persist in doing ; *(each) man with his neighbor,* not merely with another man, but with his friend, his brother, toward whom he was particularly bound to act sincerely. **A.—They speak with a double heart.** The original is, “A heart and a heart ;” one for the Church, another for the change ; one for Sundays, another for working-days. A man without a heart is a wonder, but a man with two hearts is a monster. *T. Adams.*

2-4. A “double heart” in the strong idiom of the Hebrew is “a heart and a heart”—one to hide and live by ; another to show to the world and *not* to live by. But the Lord cannot be deceived by such men. He utterly abhors their double heart, and will cut them off for their sins. Expressively said, he will cut off those treacherous lips—that proud, lying tongue ! Their spirit is further described as virtually saying, “With our tongue we are mighty ;” like heroes we say what we please ; who shall dare dictate to us ? Wonderfully true to human nature ! **C.**

A guileful heart makes guileful tongue and lips. It is the workhouse where is the forge of deceits and slanders and other evil speakings ; and the tongue is only the outer shop where they are vended, and the lips the door of it ; so then such ware as is made within, such and no other can be set out. From evil thoughts, evil speakings ; from a profane heart, profane words ; and from a malicious heart, bitter or calumnious words ; and from a deceitful heart, guileful words, well varnished but lined with rottenness. And so in the general, *from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*, as our Saviour teaches. That which the heart is full of runs over by the tongue. If the heart be full of God the tongue will delight to speak of Him ; much of heavenly things within will breathe forth something of their sweetness by the mouth ; and if nothing but earth is there, all that man’s discourse will be vain and purposeless. *Leighton.*

Consider our markets, our fairs, our private contracts and bargains, our shops, our cellars, our weights, our measures, our promises, our

protestations, our politic tricks and villainous Machiavelism, our enhancing of the prices of all commodities, and tell, whether the twelfth Psalm may not as fitly be applied to our times as to the days of the man of God. *R. Wolcombe.*

5. For the spoiling of the poor. Fear ye, whosoever ye be, that do wrong the poor ; you have power and wealth and the favor of the judges, but they have the strongest weapons of all, sighings and groanings, which fetch help from heaven for them. These weapons dig down houses, throw up foundations, overthrow whole nations. *Chrysostom.*—**The sighing of the needy.** A desire is a small matter, especially of the poor man, yet God regards the desire of the poor, and calls a good desire the greatest kindness ; “The desire of a man is his kindness.” A tear makes no great noise, yet hath a voice, “God hath heard the voice of my weeping.” A groan is a poor thing, yet is the best part of a prayer sometimes ; a sigh is less, yet God is awakened and raised up by it. *J. Sheffield.*

6. *The sayings of Jehovah are pure sayings, silver purged in a furnace of earth, refined seven times.* The Psalmist does not use the term commonly translated *words*, but one derived from the verb to say, with obvious allusion to the use of the verb itself in the preceding verse. What Jehovah there says, the promises there given, are here declared to be true without any mixture of mistake or falsehood. This is expressed by the favorite figure of pure metallic ore. The idea of extreme or perfect purity is conveyed by the idiomatic phrase, *purified seven times, i.e., repeatedly, or sevenfold, i.e., completely.* **A.**—God’s Word is pure silver that has flown off and left all dross behind it, silver that has, as it were, passed seven times through the furnace, and is therefore altogether free of alloy and very precious. Silver is an emblem of everything that is precious and pure, and seven is the number of the completed process. **D.**—The expression may import two things : first, the infallible certainty of the word ; as gold endureth in the fire when the dross is consumed. Vain conceits comfort us not in a time of trouble ; but the word of God, the more it is tried, the more you will find the excellency of it—the promise is tried as well as we are tried in deep afflictions ; but, when it is so, it will be found to be most pure ; as pure gold suffers no loss by the fire, so the promises suffer no loss when they are tried, but stand to us in our greatest troubles. Secondly, it notes the exact perfection of the word : there is no dross in

silver and gold that hath been often refined, so there is no defect in the Word of God. *Manton.*

The poet dwells on the purity and perfect truth of God's promises, not only as opposed to all lying lips of men, but also that he may thus more deeply print upon the heart of the afflicted the certain fulfilment of the promise. This emphatic assertion was rendered necessary by the widespread and apparently long-prevailing corruption. For those who were weak in faith might begin to doubt whether the truth of God itself had not failed. *P.*

Truth is the most glorious thing; the least filing of this gold is precious. Truth is ancient; its gray hairs make it venerable; it comes from Him who is the Ancient of Days. Truth is unerring; it is the star which leads to Christ. Truth is pure; it is compared to silver refined seven times. There is not the least spot on truth's face: it breathes nothing but sanctity. Truth is triumphant; it is like a great conqueror; when all its enemies lie dead it keeps the field, and sets up its trophies of victory. "The heavens being on fire shall be dissolved," but not that truth which came from heaven. *T. Watson.*—God suffers desperate opinions to be vented for the purging of His own truth. The truth of God is compared to "silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." Every corrupt opinion that comes to be vented against any truth of God is a new furnace, it comes out the purer for it. *Arrowsmith.*

The Bible has passed through the furnace of persecution, literary criticism, philosophic doubt, and scientific discovery, and has lost nothing but those human interpretations which clung to it as alloy to precious ore. The experience of saints has tried it in every conceivable manner, but not a single doctrine or promise has been consumed in the most excessive heat. *S.*—No truth is established till it has been denied and has survived. Antagonism to the Word of God should have, and will have, to those who use it rightly, a blessing in its train, in bringing out yet more of the preciousness and manifoldness, the all-sufficiency and the universality of the Book. "The more 'tis shook, the more it shines." The fiercer the blast, the firmer our confidence in the inexpugnable solidity of that tower of strength that stands four square to every wind that blows. *A. M.*

The Scriptures carry in themselves independent and convincing evidence of the truth, validity, and sufficiency of all the narratives, doc-

trines, promises, and threatenings they contain. Truth is its own witness, and exacts our assent. I recognize the handwriting of a friend without needing to be told who has written to me. We want not the stars, much less a torch, to show us the sun; it is only the blind that cannot see. *Bengel.*

Tested by the chances of any mere human conflict, of any philosophic or literary strife, the Bible would ages ago have vanished from the field and been consigned to oblivion; but here it is yet, the mightiest element in human thought, and challenging to the conflict the mightiest of human antagonisms. How it rises up, ever higher and stronger, against every fresh assault! every new phase of unbelief, when it is really new, only calling out some before unknown aspect of power in this exhaustless defence. But it is not enough to say that the Bible has kept its ground in the world; it has ever been extending itself, not only into new territory, but into new fields of thought. Philosophy assumes to be independent of it, but finds, in the end, that it must go the way of all human speculations, or fortify itself by ideas that can never more belong to human thinking should this book be discarded from the world. So science, too, often "seems first in its own cause, until revelation cometh and searcheth it." Some startling discovery has raised the hopes of unbelief, but soon this more ancient power in the world, this power of the unseen and the eternal, rides over the sense difficulty, or shows it to belong to a lower plane of knowledge with which the diviner truth can have no actual or imagined collision. Every other assumed revelation has been addressed to but one phase of humanity. They have been adapted to one age, to one people, or one peculiar style of human thought. Their books have never assumed a cosmical character, or been capable of any catholic expansion. They could never be "accommodated" to other ages, or acclimated to other parts of the world. They are indigenous plants, that can never grow out of the zone that gave them birth. Zoroaster never made a disciple beyond Persia or its immediate neighborhood; Confucius is wholly Chinese as Socrates is wholly Greek. *T. Lewis.*

The Bible has passed triumphantly through the ordeal of verbal criticism. English infidels of the last century raised a premature pæan over the discovery and publication of so many various readings. They imagined that the popular mind would be rudely and thoroughly shaken, that Christianity would be placed in imminent peril of extinction, and that the

Church would be dispersed, and ashamed at the sight of its *magna charta*. But the result has blasted all their hopes, and the oracles of God are found to be preserved in immaculate integrity.

The storm which shakes the oak only loosens the earth around its roots, and its violence enables the tree to strike its roots deeper in the soil. So it is that Scripture has gloriously surmounted every trial. These gather round the Bible a dense "cloud of witnesses," from the ruins of Nineveh and the valley of the Nile; from the slabs and bas-reliefs of Sennacherib, and tombs and monuments of Pharaoh; from rolls of Chaldee paraphrast, and Syrian versionists; from the cells of monastic scribes, and the dry and dusty labors of scholars and antiquarians. Our present Bibles are undiluted by the lapse of ages. Her oracles written amid such

strange diversity of time, place and condition—among the sands and cliffs of Arabia, the fields and hills of Palestine—in the palaces of Babylon, and in the dungeons of Rome—have come to us in such unimpaired fulness and accuracy, that we are placed as advantageously toward them as the generation which hung on the lips of Jesus as He recited a parable on the shores of the Galilean lake, or as those churches which received from Paul or Peter one of their epistles of warning exposition.

Yes; the river of life, which issues out from beneath the throne of God and the Lamb, may, as it flows through so many countries, sometimes bear with it the earthly evidences of its conquests; but the great volume of its waters has neither been diminished nor dimmed in its transparency, nor bereft of its healing virtue. *North British Review.*

PSALM XIII.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN. A PSALM OF DAVID.

1 How long, O LORD, wilt thou forget me for ever?

How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?

2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul,

Having sorrow in my heart all the day?

How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?

3 Consider *and* answer me, O LORD my God:

Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the *sleep of* death;

4 Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him;

Lest mine adversaries rejoice when I am moved.

5 But I have trusted in thy mercy;

My heart shall rejoice in thy salvation:

6 I will sing unto the LORD,

Because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

IN this Psalm we see a servant of God long and sorely tried by the persecutions of unrelenting enemies, and, as it seems to himself, forgotten and forsaken of God, pouring out the agony of his soul in prayer. It is a long and weary struggle; it is a daily and hourly martyrdom; and, wrestling with his despair, he can but cry (like the souls under the altar, Rev. 6:10), How long? And then calmer words of prayer rise to his lips (vs. 3, 4). And at last faith asserts her perfect victory (v. 5). The rapid transition of feeling, from a depth of misery bordering on despair to hope, and even joy, is very remarkable. P.

David probably passed through experiences of this sort more than once. They are not unusual in the life-history of God's people. It is well therefore that such a Psalm should have a

place in the devotional songs of Zion, evermore impressing the precious truth that God's trustful children will surely come forth from every affliction, however sore, with a song of praise; that God will not forget them forever; that, having put their faith to stern trial, He will make this very trial yield the fruit of a purer and stronger faith, a richer joy in God, and a firmer footing upon His promises. C.

1, 2. The refusal or delay of the Divine help is here, as often elsewhere, represented by the figures of forgetfulness and an averted countenance. To the eye of sense and reason, the abandonment seemed final; but faith still prompted the inquiry, *how long*, which implies that it was not to last forever. A.—This is a state in which *Hope despairs, and yet Despair hopes* at the same time; and all that lives is

“the groaning that cannot be uttered,” where-with the Holy Spirit maketh intercession for us, brooding over the waters shrouded in darkness, to use the expression in Gen. 1. This no one understands who has not tasted it. *Luther*.—The self-contradiction of the question is to be explained by the conflict between the spirit and the flesh that is raging within. The desponding heart thinks, God has forgotten me forever; but the spirit repels this thought and turns it into a question, which marks this forsaking as being only apparent: how long shall it seem that Thou forgettest me forever? Four times does David raise this cry of faith from the very depths of his spirit. D.

The intenseness of the affliction renders it trying to our fortitude; but it is by the continuance of it that patience is put to the test. It is not under the sharpest, but the longest trials, that we are most in danger of fainting. In the first case, the soul collects all its strength, and feels in earnest to call in help from above; but, in the last, the mind relaxes, and sinks into despondency. *A. Fuller*.—And what if there be some impatience mingled therewith; is not this the more true a portrait of our own experience? It is not easy to prevent desire from degenerating into impatience. O for grace, that while we wait on God we may be kept from indulging a murmuring spirit! S.

3. *Look, hear me, Jehovah, my God, lighten my eyes, lest I sleep the death.* The complaint is now followed by a corresponding prayer. In allusion to the hiding of the face in v. 1, he now beseeches God to look toward him or upon him, to show by His acts that He has not lost sight of him. As he before complained of God's forgetting him, so here he prays that He will hear and answer him. The idea of Jehovah as a God in covenant with His people is brought out still more fully by the phrase *my God, i.e.*, one on whom I have a right to call, with a well-founded hope of being heard. *Enlighten my eyes*, or make them shine, is by some understood to mean, dispel my doubts and extricate me out of my perplexities. Others with more probability suppose an allusion to the dimness of the eyes produced by extreme weakness or approaching death, and understand the prayer as one for restoration and deliverance from imminent destruction. Compare 1 Sam. 14:27, 29, where the relief of Jonathan's debility occasioned by long fasting is described by saying that his eyes were enlightened. *Lest I sleep (in) death*, or *lest I sleep the (sleep of) death*, as in the common version. Compare the beautiful description of death as a *sleep of perpetuity*, a

perpetual or everlasting sleep, in Jer. 51:39, 57. A.

The illuminating light is the loving light of the Divine countenance. Light, love, life and their opposites, darkness, wrath, death, are ideas closely linked together in Scripture. He whom God looks upon in love continues to live; new vital powers permeate him; he does not have to sleep death, *i.e.*, the sleep of death. For such a light of life he prays. D.

The sleep of death. It is not the enemy death which seizes a believer, but the shadow, or emblem of it, *sleep*. Weary soul, tired out with the burden of sin, corruptions, afflictions, accusations, temptations—is sleep an enemy to you? Are you afraid of rest? What! fear to fall asleep in Jesus, to awake in His presence, to be satisfied with perfect likeness to Him, and eternally to enjoy Him! *W. Mason*.—If you would awake satisfied in the perfected likeness of Christ, and with the closest, most endearing fellowship with Christ; if, shining in the light of the Lamb, you would join the saintly hosts in their new rapt song of grateful love, and if, to crown and complete this blessed experience, you would have your spirit pervaded with the assured conviction that this holy character, this Divine fellowship, this unutterable joy will be unchangeably, *forever* yours, then hold steadfastly on in trustful, full-hearted consecration to your Saviour King! B.

5, 6. The five lines of lamentation and the four of supplication are now followed by four of joyous anticipation. In the stormily agitated soul of the suppliant all has now become calm. Although the storm may still continue to rage without, there is peace in the depths of his heart. D.—How often do we find the holy prophet when he first kneels down to pray full of fears and doubts, who, before he and the duty part, grows into a sweet familiarity with God and repose in his own spirit! He begins his prayer as if he thought God would never give him a kind look more: “*How long wilt Thou forget me, O Lord? forever?*” But by the time he had exercised himself a little in duty his distemper wears off, the mists scatter and his faith breaks out as the sun in its strength: “*I have trusted in Thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation. I will sing unto the Lord.*” *Gurnall*.

In the beginning of the Psalm we have him drooping, trembling, and ready to sink into melancholy and despair; but in the close of it, rejoicing in God, and elevated and enlarged in his praises. See the power of faith, the power of prayer, and how good it is to draw near to

God. If we bring our cares and griefs to the throne of grace and leave them there, we may go away like Hannah, and our *countenance will be no more sad* (1 Sam. 1 : 18). And still *I do trust in Thy mercy* ; so some read it. “ I refer myself to that, with an assurance that it will do well for me at last.” This he pleads with God, knowing what pleasure he takes in those that *hope in His mercy* (147 : 11). H.—It was mercy that first washed us in that precious blood ; it was mercy that put that glorious robe around us ; and having done so much for us, mercy will not now forsake us. It is mercy’s voice that will pronounce us blessed ; mercy’s hand that will open heaven to us ; and mercy’s power and riches that will make us happy in it. Hence the heirs of heaven are called by an apostle “ vessels of mercy prepared unto glory ;” and another apostle calls the very glory they look for, mercy. It is “ the mercy,” he says, “ of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life ;” mercy that becomes at last salvation, mercy laying aside the form of earthly grace and consolation, and shining forth in the splendor of heavenly joy. C. Bradley.

His faith in God’s mercy filled his heart with *joy in his salvation* ; for joy and peace come by *believing*. *Believing, ye rejoice* (1 Pet. 1 : 8). Having put his trust in the mercy of God, he is fully assured of salvation, and that his heart, which was now daily grieving, should *rejoice in that salvation*. Though weeping endure long, joy will return. H.—Rejoice that ye have passed from death to life, and that there is now no condemnation for them who are in Christ Jesus. Rejoice that you are also advanced to the dearest and most intimate relation to all the Persons of the ever-blessed Godhead. By your new birth ye are become the sons of God, members of Christ, and temples for the Holy Ghost. Rejoice that God hath made with you an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things and sure. He hath given you a variety of exceeding great and precious promises, so that there can be no possible exigence in your situation, in which you may not find a suitable and abun-

dant relief, in these gracious assurances of a faithful God. Rejoice that the life which is begun in you is an immortal principle that can never be extinguished. Ye are born again by the Spirit of God ; and ye are kept by His mighty power through faith unto salvation. And rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. “ Fear not, little flock,” said the blessed Jesus, “ for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” Ere long your trials and sufferings shall come to an end, and your light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall be followed by an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory. R. Walker.

6. His *joy in God’s salvation* would fill his mouth with *songs of praise* ; “ *I will sing unto the Lord*, sing in remembrance of what He has done formerly. I will sing in hope of what He will do for me at last ; being confident that all will end well, will end everlastingly well. But he speaks of it as a thing past ; *He has dealt bountifully with me* ; because by faith he had received the earnest of the salvation, and he was as confident of it as if it had been done already. H.—Faith keeps the soul from sinking under heavy trials, by bringing in former experiences of the power, mercy, and faithfulness of God to the afflicted soul. Hereby was the Psalmist supported in distress. Oh, saith faith, remember what God hath done both for thy outward and inward man ; He hath not only delivered thy body when in trouble, but He hath done great things for thy soul ; He hath brought thee out of a state of black nature, entered into a covenant relation with thee, made His goodness pass before thee ; He hath helped thee to pray, and many times hath heard thy prayers and thy tears. Willison.

The Psalm closes with a sentence which is a refutation of the charge of forgetfulness which David had uttered in the first verse, “ *He hath dealt bountifully with me.*” So shall it be with us if we wait awhile. The complaint which in our haste we utter shall be joyfully retracted, and we shall witness that the Lord hath dealt bountifully with us. S.

PSALM XIV.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN. A PSALM OF DAVID.

- 1 THE fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.
They are corrupt, they have done abominable works ;
There is none that doeth good.
- 2 THE LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men,
To see if there were any that did understand,
That did seek after God.
- 3 They are all gone aside ; they are together become filthy ;
There is none that doeth good, no, not one.
- 4 Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge ?

- Who eat up my people *as* they eat bread,
And call not upon the LORD.
- 5 There were they in great fear :
For God is in the generation of the righteous.
- 6 Ye put to shame the counsel of the poor,
Because the LORD is his refuge.
- 7 Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion !
When the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people,
Then shall Jacob rejoice, *and* Israel shall be glad.

THERE seems to be no reference to any particular historical occasion. The Psalm was, no doubt, originally written to express the feelings of God's people, in all times and places, with respect to the original depravity of all men and the obstinate persistency in evil of the greater number. A.—The singer, keenly alive to the evils of his time, sees everything in the blackest colors. The apostasy is so widespread that all are involved in it, except the small remnant (implied in v. 4) ; and the world seems again ripe for judgment as in the days of Noah (v. 2). Both in this Psalm and in Psalm 12 the complaint is made that the wicked oppress and devour the righteous. In both corruption has risen to its most gigantic height ; but here the *doings* of bad men, there their *words*, form the chief subject of complaint. In form the ode is dramatic, or quasi-dramatic. A great tragedy is enacting before the eyes of the poet. Sin is lifting itself up in Titanic madness against God, and God looks down upon its doings as once upon the builders of Babel. He sees utter apostasy (v. 3) ; H₃ speaks from heaven (v. 4), and the evil-doers are confounded at the word of His mouth (v. 5). "It would scarcely be possible," says Ewald, "for a great truth to be sketched in fewer or more striking outlines." There is nothing in the Psalm which can lead us to fix its date or authorship precisely. The feeling is common enough at all times in men of earnest mind. Filled with a holy jealousy for God, no age seems to them so corrupt as their own, because they are engaged in perpetual and, as they are apt to think,

hopeless encounter with its evils. Indeed, despair would be the result, did not the promise of the future lift them above the present (v. 7). P.

There is a peculiar mark put upon this Psalm, in that it is twice in the Book of Psalms. The fourteenth Psalm and the fifty-third Psalm are the same, with the alteration of one or two expressions at most. And there is another mark put upon it, that the apostle transcribes a great part of it. *Owen*.

I. Fool. The language of the Old Testament is uncommonly rich in designations of the unwise. The simple and the silly form the lowest rounds of this ladder ; the idiot and the lunatic, the uppermost. In the middle lies the notion of the fool or crack-brained, which signifies either to project, to be prominent, or to distend one's self, to relax, to become decrepit, to wither. "A fool" (thus Isa. 32 : 6) "speaks folly and his heart works iniquity, to practise knavery and to utter foolish things against Jehovah, to leave empty the soul of the hungry, and to refuse drink to the thirsty." D.—The Hebrew is singularly rich in words expressing folly, with the inseparable notion of wickedness. Here the word chosen by David, *nabal*, means imbecile, a vapid, worn-out fool, one whose heart and understanding are degraded, incapable of seeing truth. It is a word never used of mere natural obtuseness, but of spiritual corruption. *Cook*.

In his heart. Rather a practical than a theoretical atheism ; not so much a denial of the *being* of a God, as a denial of His *moral*

government of the world ; and this evinced in their actions, rather than in their words. Their lives show what the thought of their hearts is (as indeed immediately follows). "The fool" is not the philosophic atheist with his arguments ; but the man who, by the *practice of wickedness* so stifles and corrupts within him the knowledge of God that he *virtually* acknowledges no God. P.

The atheist is morally as well as mentally a fool, a fool in the heart as well as in the head ; a fool in morals as well as in philosophy. With the denial of God as a starting-point, we may well conclude that the fool's progress is a rapid, riotous, raving, ruinous one. He who begins at impiety is ready for anything. "*No God*," being interpreted, means no law, no order, no restraint to lust, no limit to passion. S.—The atheist's divinity is couched in one article, and that negative, too, clean contrary to the fashion of all creeds, "*There is no God*." The article but one ; but so many absurdities tied to the train of it and itself so irreligious, so prodigiously profane, that he dares not speak it out, but saith it softly to himself, in secret, "*in his heart*." R. Clerke.—Atheism is too conscious to be venturous and open. That is the property of truth, the daughter of the light and of the day. South.

It is not said, "The fool hath *thought* in his heart ;" he *saith* it by rote to himself as that he would have, rather than that he can thoroughly believe it or be persuaded of it ; for none deny there is a God but those for whom it maketh that there were no God. It appeareth in nothing more that atheism is rather in the lip than in the heart of man than by this, that atheists will ever be talking of that their opinion, as if they fainted in it within themselves and would be glad to be strengthened by the consent of others ; nay more, you shall have atheists strive to get disciples, as it fareth with other sects ; and, which is most of all, you shall have of them that will suffer for atheism and not recant ; whereas, if they did truly think that there were no such thing as God, why should they trouble themselves ? Bacon.

Religion, as both the corner-stone and the keystone of morality, must have a *moral* origin ; so far at least that the evidence of its doctrines could not, like the truths of abstract science, be wholly independent of the will. It were therefore to be expected that fundamental truths would be such as might be denied, though only by the *fool*, and even by the fool from the madness of the *heart* alone. Coleridge.

Whosoever shall observe the disposition of all

the parts of the world, their connection, comeliness, the variety of seasons, the swarms of different creatures, and the mutual offices they render to one another, cannot conclude less than it was contrived by an infinite skill, effected by infinite power, and governed by infinite wisdom. None can imagine the parts of the world to perform their several functions without a wise guide ; considering the members of the body cannot perform theirs, without the active presence of the soul. The atheist, then, is a fool to deny that which every creature in his constitution asserts, and thereby renders himself unable to give a satisfactory account of that constant uniformity in the motions of the creatures. Charnock.

In its investigations of questions of origins, science has made a discovery. It has seen plainly that atheism is unscientific. It is a remarkable thing that, after trailing its black length for centuries across European thought, atheism should have had its doom pronounced by science. H. Drummond.

I had rather believe all the fables in the legend and the Talmud and the Alcoran, than that this universal frame is without a mind ; and therefore God never wrought miracles to convince atheism, because His ordinary works convince it. It is true that a little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism ; but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion ; for while the mind of man looketh upon second causes scattered, it may sometimes rest in them and go no further, but when it beholdeth the chain of them confederate and linked together, it must needs fly to Providence and Deity. Bacon.

The philosophy which eliminates the supernatural is hopelessly shattered in the court of every man's conscience. The denial of the living God involves discredit of the moral nature, whose ingrained sense of guilt and consciousness of weakness demand a pardoning and redeeming God. Hence, Tertullian speaks of the soul's testimony as naturally Christian ; and Augustine describes the heart of man as restless until it found its rest in God. . . . As Descartes insisted that absolute doubt involved the existence of the doubter, defying elimination by any process of dialectics, so it may be said that personality is itself the affirmation of the supernatural, and that even he who denies the existence of a personal God proves that the idea of the supernatural is a perfectly indigenous and familiar form of thought. It is a waste of time to argue with an atheist or a pantheist. The short method with such people is the direct

appeal to the sense of personal dependence, and of personal obligation. The only argument here is that of self-conviction; and that can never fail, for the soul is eternally at war with any system which eliminates the ethical, and the ethical means a personal and righteous God. *Behrends.*

To see rare effects and no cause; an excellent government and no ruler; a motion without an immovable; a circle without a centre; a time without eternity; a second without a first; a thing that begins not from itself, and therefore not to perceive there is something from whence it does begin, which must be without beginning—these things are so against philosophy and natural reason, that he must needs be a beast in his understanding that does not assent to them; this is the atheist: “*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*” That is his character; the thing framed says that nothing framed it; the tongue never made itself to speak, yet talks against Him that did, saying, that which is made is, and that which made it is not. But this folly is as infinite as hell, as much without light or bound as the chaos or the primitive nothing. *Jeremy Taylor.*

The wonder turns on the great process by which a man could grow to the immense intelligence that *can* know that there is no God. What ages and what lights are requisite for this attainment! This intelligence involves the very attributes of divinity, while a God is denied. For unless this man is omnipresent, unless he is at this moment in every place in the universe, he cannot know but there may be in some place manifestations of a Deity by which even *he* would be overpowered. If he does not know absolutely every agent in the universe, the one that he does not know may be God. If he is not himself the chief agent in the universe and does not know what is so, that which is so may be God. If he is not in absolute possession of all the propositions that constitute universal truth, the one which he wants may be that there is a God. If he cannot with certainty assign the cause of all that he perceives to exist, that cause may be a God. If he does not know everything that has been done in the immeasurable ages that are past, some things may have been done by a God. Thus unless he knows all things—that is, precludes another Deity by being one himself—he cannot know that the Being whose existence he rejects does not exist. But he must know that He does not exist, else he deserves equal contempt and compassion for the temerity with which he firmly avows his rejection, and acts accordingly. *J. F.*—

Atheism robs the universe of all finished and consummate excellence even of idea. The admiration of perfect wisdom and goodness, for which we are formed and which kindles such unspeakable rapture in the soul, finding in the regions of scepticism nothing to which it corresponds, droops and languishes. In a world which presents a fair spectacle of order and beauty; of a vast family, nourished and supported by an almighty Parent; in a world which leads the devout mind, step by step, to the contemplation of the first fair and the first good, the sceptic is encompassed with nothing but obscurity, meanness, and disorder. *R. Hall.*

A fatherless world it is which atheism presents to us; let no one tell me that it does not need a God! It is weak and sickly, and needs a strong Divine arm to lean upon, a strong Divine tenderness to nurse and shield it. It is a world in rags, cold, hungry, thirsty, wandering about without shelter under inclement skies; it needs a Heavenly Father to care for it, and give it home and fireside and raiment and daily bread. It is a sorrowful world, it needs a Heavenly and omnipresent Consoler; a world full of temptations and dangers, it needs a Heavenly and omnipresent Protector; a world full of wrong tendencies and actual disorders, wilful and wayward and corrupt to a miracle, it needs a Wise, Omnipotent, and yet Pitiful Heavenly Governor; a world full of ignorance and error, it needs a Heavenly and Omnipotent Counsellor and Enlightener. *Burr.*

Atheism takes away Christ, but leaves sin. It forbids the remedy, but leaves the leprosy burning like fire into flesh and bones. It takes away the Gospel, and leaves the stern facts and realities of nature. Sorrow, affliction, remorse, sweat, labor, sickness, bereavement, death—it leaves them all in the world! It extinguishes no evil, wipes no tear, imparts no comfort; and hence it is that, granting all that infidelity ever claimed, it disbelieves nothing but the remedy, and leaves man to be broken and crushed by those great laws and facts of nature which roll over him more resistless than the mighty wheels which Ezekiel saw in his vision at Chebar. If any man disbelieves the Gospel of Christ, the only result is that he leaves himself in that very state in which he was without the Gospel. Infidelity is a mere negation. It does not pretend to supply the place which it has vacated. It takes away the Saviour who was born in Bethlehem, but does it substitute a better? It leaves man to suffer, sorrow, weep, and die, unconsolated, unhelped, uncheered, and unbles-

ed ! Leaves him as before, did we say ? With one grave supplement of misery ! The disease is exasperated when remedies are rejected ; and the infatuation which refuses the friendly offices of the Redeemer can only treasure up and aggravate the miseries of remorse. *W. Adams.*

It is not much that the good man ventures : after this life, if there be no God, he is as well as the bad ; but if there be a God, is infinitely better ; even as much as unspeakable and eternal happiness is better than extreme and endless misery. *Tillotson.*—Indisputably, the firm believers in the Gospel have a great advantage over all others—for this simple reason, that if true, they will have their reward hereafter ; and if there be no hereafter, they can be but with the infidel in his eternal sleep, having had the assistance of an exalted hope through life, without subsequent disappointment, since (at the worst of them) “out of nothing nothing can arise,” not even sorrow. *Lord Byron.*

They that deny a God destroy man's nobility ; for certainly man is of kin to the beast by his body ; and if he be not of kin to God by his spirit, he is a base and ignoble creature. *Bacon.*

Have done abominable works. Bad principles soon lead to bad lives. One does not find virtue promoted by the example of your Voltaires and Tom Paines. Those who talk so abominably as to deny their Maker will act abominably when it serves their turn. It is the abounding denial and forgetfulness of God among men which is the source of the unrighteousness and crime which we see around us. *S.*—Where has infidelity ever purified a heart, or blessed a family, or enriched and tranquillized a community, or built a hospital, or opened an asylum for orphans, or, in short, done any good thing ? *Morrison.*

Whatever defects and imperfections may attach to a few points of the doctrinal system of Calvin—the bulk of which was simply what all Christians believe—it will be found that Calvinism, or any other ism which claims an open Bible and proclaims a crucified and risen Christ, is infinitely preferable to any form of polite and polished scepticism, which gathers as its votaries the degenerate sons of heroic ancestors, who, having been trained in a society and educated in schools, the foundations of which were laid by men of faith and piety, now turn and kick down the ladder by which they have climbed up, and persuade men to live without God and leave them to die without hope. The worst kind of religion is no religion at all ; and these men, living in ease and luxury, indulging

themselves in the amusement of going without religion, may be thankful that they live in lands where the Gospel they neglect has tamed the beastliness and ferocity of the men who, but for Christianity, might long ago have eaten their carcasses like the South Sea Islanders, or cut off their heads and tanned their hides like the monsters of the French Revolution. When the microscopic search of scepticism, which had hunted the heavens and sounded the seas to disprove the existence of a Creator, has turned its attention to human society, and has found a place on this planet ten miles square where a decent man can live in decency, comfort, and security, supporting and educating his children unspoiled and unpolluted ; a place where age is revered, infancy respected, womanhood honored, and human life held in due regard—when sceptics can find such a place ten miles square on this globe, where the Gospel of Christ has not gone and cleared the way and laid the foundations and made decency and security possible, it will then be in order for the sceptical *literati* to move thither, and then ventilate their views. But so long as these very men are dependent upon the religion which they discard for every privilege they enjoy, they may well hesitate a little before they seek to rob the Christian of his hope and humanity of its faith in that Saviour who alone has given to man that hope of life eternal which makes life tolerable and society possible and robs death of its terrors and the grave of its gloom. *J. R. Lowell.*

2. God's judgment rests upon a knowledge of the actual state of the case, which is represented in such passages after the manner of men. God's eyes, which take in everything and pierce through everything, review humanity. Is there one who shows discernment in thinking and in acting, one to whom fellowship with God is the highest good and therefore also that after which he strives ?—so inquires God, who has His delight in such, and whose close and yearning search such would certainly not escape. *D.*

Understand. Or, *deal wisely.* All men living without God are adventurers out upon God's world, in neglect of Him, to choose their own course. There is nothing good preparing for any man who will not live in God's plan. If he goes a prospecting for himself, and will not apprehend that for which he is apprehended, it cannot be to any good purpose. Nothing is more sad and painful to think of, to a soul properly enlightened by reason and God's truth, than so many years of Divine good squandered and lost ; whole years, possibly many years, of

that great and blessed biography which God designed for a man, occupied by a frivolous and foolish invention of his own, substituted for the good counsel of God's infinite wisdom and love. *Bushnell*.—It is not for God that the disbelieving man is a merchant, an artisan, a man of property, a laborer, a citizen, or the head of a family; it is for himself. He is his own God and his own law. Events adverse and prosperous come by turns. They succeed each other without interruption, and always find him without God. Happy—he has no emotion of gratitude to the Lord. Unhappy—he does not receive the occasion of it as a reproof or a counsel. Sick—he thinks not of the great Physician. Dying—he has no hope of heaven. In a word, that thought of God which must be everything or nothing in the life is nothing in his; nothing, at least, worth estimating. He yields nothing to it, sacrifices nothing, offers nothing. All his actions prove that his thoughts are all as if there were no God! *A. Vinet*.

3. *The whole has apostatized; together they have putrefied; there is none doing good; there is not even one.* Total and universal corruption could not be more clearly expressed than by this accumulation of the strongest terms, in which, as Luther well observes, the Psalmist, not content with saying *all*, adds *together*, and then negatively, *no, not one*. It is plain that he had no limitation or exception in his mind, but intended to describe the natural condition of *all men*, in the widest and most unrestricted sense. *The whole*, not merely *all* the individuals as such, but the entire race as a totality or ideal person. *A.*—See how many words he uses that he may comprehend all, excluding none. First he says *all*, then *together*, and then *no, not one*. *Luther*.—Their sin is described in gradation. They do *not understand*, because a true knowledge of things Divine forms the basis of proper conduct toward God; they do *not ask for God*, because they only care for Him whose clear and sure insight apprehends Him as their highest possession; they are *gone aside*, because he who cares not for Him is sure to get estranged from Him, and to deviate from His paths; and they are *altogether become filthy* (*i.e.*, worthless), because man's proper strength and fitness for virtue must well from the fountain of communion with God. *Tholuck*.

Each age of men has its peculiarities—each country its peculiar temper and type of civilization. Each class has its good and weak points, its elevating convictions, its unworthy prejudices. No two human characters, as no two human faces, are exactly alike. But one thing

there is that unites us all. One consciousness there is in which we all, of all ages and all countries, of all classes and tempers, sooner or later must agree, and that is, that we are sinners. It is now as it was in the ages of old. David's saying is alway true. "There is none righteous, no, not one." *H. P. L.*—All the advances in our latter-day science and philosophy have not in anywise affected the doctrine of depravity. The best natural man of the nineteenth century, with all that the centuries have done for him and all that he is able to do for himself, is still a sinner and conscious of his sin. He is as really and hopelessly involved in the meshes of guilt as was Cain when he cried, "My burden is greater than I can bear!" or David when he made his supplication, "Have mercy upon me, O God, and according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." The same penalty that was pronounced upon sin in the beginning hangs over it to day. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." And the soul of the whole ruined race, groaning and travailing, utters forth as anxiously as ever the old question: "What shall I do to be saved?" *D. J. Burrell*.

Sin is actually found in every one of us, from the moment he wakes to consciousness—that is, the moment he knows that he exists at all. It is an internal disease, and not on the surface. It is of the heart, and not of the hands and feet. It belongs to character before it belongs to conduct, or else it would never seriously estrange us from God. It is a vitiated state of the spiritual system and its circulations. Its forms are manifold; it breaks out into avarice, lust, temper, falsehood, slander, vanity, selfishness, profanity—the whole brood of vices, crimes, impieties, worldlinesses. But they all have one organic root in the heart. They press and goad us, they beset us in society and solitude, they follow after and irritate and corrupt us. And just so far as they master us, they drag us apart from God. Just as far as we yield to them, we lose sight of Him, and the blessed feeling of friendship which is our need. The difficulty is sin. *F. D. H.*

Human nature as created is upright, as born or propagated, a corrupted and damaged nature. But however corrupted and damaged, however fallen, it has the original Divine impress on it, everywhere discernible. It has the same feelings, sentiments, powers of thought and affection, the same longings and aspirations, only choked in their volume, and crazed by the stormy battle of internal discord and passion in which they have their element. The most sad

fact—fact and also evidence—of human depravity is, that the religious nature stands a temple still for God, only scarred and blackened by the brimstone fires of evil; more majestic possibly as a ruin than it would be if it did not prove its grandeur by the desolations it withstands. *Bushnell.*—The stately ruins visible to every eye bear in their front (yet extant) this doleful inscription—here God once dwelt. Enough appears of the admirable frame and structure of the soul of man to show that the Divine presence did once dwell in it, more than enough of vicious deformity to proclaim He is now retired and gone. Look upon the fragments of that curious sculpture which once adorned the palace of that Great King—the relics of common notions—the lively prints of some undefaced truth—the fair ideas of things—the yet legible precepts that relate to practice. Behold with what accuracy the broken pieces show these to have been engraven by the finger of God; and how they be torn and scattered, one in this dark corner, and another in that, buried in heaps of dust and rubbish. *Howe.*

It is vain for any man who has a conscience, and who believes in Providence and law—it is vain for any man who has ever reflected upon his nature and his prospects, to allege that he is under no vows to God. We have all made them, and, alas! we have all broken them. Their wrecks may be seen along the whole course of our history. When I reflect upon the magnitude of human guilt in this single aspect of it, I am amazed and confounded at the long-suffering forbearance of God. I am ashamed of myself, I am ashamed of my species, when I recollect how false and faithless we have been. Who can boast of his honor, who can scorn the imputation of a lie, when there are promises in heaven unredeemed, vows that are forgotten or despised? Who dares glory in his righteousness when the first principles of justice are openly transgressed? No, no. We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. But in His amazing goodness there is a remedy. All-guilty as we are, we can be pardoned and accepted; all-polluted as we are, we can be purified and cleansed. There is a fountain opened in the house of David for sin and uncleanness. Let us wash in that fountain, and we shall come forth new men—men of real truth, honor and integrity. The laws of God will be put into our minds and written upon our hearts, and the Spirit of all grace will effectually train us for glory, honor and immortality, and crown us with eternal life. *T'hornwell.*

5. There. It does not mean “there, *i.e.*, some day,” as if it pointed to an indefinite future, but “there, *i.e.*, then,” when God shall speak to them in His wrath. Then, when God’s longsuffering passes over into indignation and wrath, their inmost heart trembles with anguish at the prospect of judgment. On the other hand, however, this judgment of wrath is a revelation of love. D.—By *generation* we are not to understand merely contemporaries. Here, as often elsewhere, a moral meaning attaches to the word, and it denotes those who are of *the same spirit*, whether that be the spirit of the world or the spirit which is of God. P.

6. In consequence of the self-attestation of God in judgment, of which he has become so certain and the assurance of which fills him with such consolation, the Psalmist himself confronts his oppressors, full of joyous defiance. D.—*Ye put to shame the counsel of the poor, because the Lord is his refuge.* In the fifty-third Psalm it is, “Thou hast put them to shame, because God hath despised them.” Of course, the allusion is totally different in each; in this Psalm it is the indignant remonstrance of the Psalmist with “the workers of iniquity” for undervaluing and putting God’s poor to shame; the other affirms the final shame and confusion of the ungodly, and the contempt in which the Lord holds them. In either case it illustrates God’s care of His poor and lowly ones, the oppressed and the injured. It is this character of God which is so conspicuously delineated in His word. We may look through all the Shasters and Vedas of the Hindoo, the Koran of the Mohammedan, the legislation of the Greek, and the code of the Roman, aye, and the Talmud of the Jew, the bitterest of all; and not in one single line or page shall we find a vestige or trace of that tenderness, compassion, or sympathy for the wrongs, and oppressions, and trials, and sorrows of God’s poor, which the Christian’s Bible evidences in almost every page. *Bouchier.*

7. In this concluding expression is formulated the view that prevails throughout the whole Psalm, that in the midst of the world, and even in the midst of the so-called Israel, the “righteous generation” finds itself in a condition of oppression, imprisonment and bondage. When God shall turn this condition of His people, then Jacob shall exult and Israel be glad. To rejoice then is the grateful duty of the redeemed. And how could they do otherwise! D.

Atheism, Pantheism, Superstition and Faith. There are those who discover reigning design

in all God's works, and so are opposed to atheism; who discover evidence of a power separated from and above nature, a pure and benevolent God, and so have extricated themselves from the toils of pantheism; who observe a present God in the more striking agents which He employs, but who trace Him, too, in those daily gifts which are not less beneficent because they are constantly bestowed, and in those regular arrangements of Providence which are not less wonderful because they may have become familiar to us. It is a sound and enlightened faith. It keeps the mind in a vigorous and healthy state. The error of the atheist arises from his not observing the footsteps of a designing mind in the heavens and earth without us, or of a Governor and Judge in the moral sense or law within us. The error of the pantheist does not consist in his contemplating the laws of nature, so exact and so beautiful, but in refusing to look beyond them to a wise, an intelligent, a righteous, and benevolent Being, who not only gave to matter all its laws, but all its arrangements also, and uses them for the furtherance of moral ends. The error of the superstitious man consists in his seeing God only in those events which are fitted to startle his fears or stir his fancy, while he pays no regard to other portions of God's works reflecting no less clearly the perfections of his character. The atheist closes his eyelids, and asserts that there is no God because he will not open his eyes to behold the traces of Him. The philosophical and poetical pantheist, the worshipper of nature, opens his eyes only half-way; and amid the many lovely "dreams that wave before the half-shut eye," he refuses to gaze upon the still lovelier, but more dazzling image of a holy God. The victim of superstition opens and shuts his eyes by turns, opens them when there is anything to alarm or please, and shuts them against all that might enlighten the reason, or mould the character after the image of a perfect God. True faith opens the eyes, and keeps them fully directed upon the glorious works of nature, and wonderful events of Providence, till they rise in glowing admiration, to the perception of a light ever shining, with unchanged and unchangeable lustre, upon a universe rejoicing in its beams; and they continue to gaze till, "dazzled by excess of light," they shut themselves, in holy meditation and devout adoration. *M'Cosh,*

He who thinks most deeply, and has the most intimate acquaintance with human nature, as exhibited in his own heart, will be the most apt to resolve all unbelief into atheism. Especially will this be the case at a time when physical science, in league with a subtle pantheism, is everywhere substituting its jargon of laws, and elements, and nebular star-dust, and vital forces, and magnetic fluids, for the recognition of a personal God, and an ever-wakeful, ever-energizing special Providence. Theism, we admit, is everywhere the avowed creed, but it wants life. It is too much of a mere philosophy. There are times when the bare thought that *God is* comes home to the soul with a power and a flash of light which gives a new illumination and a more vivid interest to every other moral truth. It is on such occasions the conviction is felt that all unbelief is atheism, or an acknowledgment of a mere natural power clothed with no moral attributes, and giving rise to no moral sanctions. We want vividness given to the great idea of God as a judge, a moral governor, the special superintendent of the world and all its movements, the head of a *moral* system, to which the machinery of *natural* laws serves but as the temporary scaffolding, to be continued, changed, replaced, or finally removed, when the great ends for which alone it was designed shall have been accomplished. Just as such an idea of God is strong and clear, so will be a conviction of sin, so will be a sense of the need of expiation, so will be a belief in a personal Redeemer, and so will follow in its train an assurance of all the solemn verities of the Christian faith, so strong and deep that no boastful pretension of that science which makes the natural the foundation of the moral, and no stumbling-blocks in the letter of the Bible, will for a moment yield it any disquietude. There is a want of such a faith, as is shown by the feverish anxiety in respect to the discoveries of science, and the results of the agitations of the social and political world. This timid unbelief, when called by its true name, is atheism. The next great battle-ground of infidelity will not be the Scriptures. What faith there may remain will be summoned to defend the very being of a God, the great truth involving every other moral and religious truth—the primal truth, *that He is, and that He is the rewarder of all who diligently seek Him.* *T. Lewis.*

PSALM XV.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1 LORD, who shall sojourn in thy tabernacle ?
 Who shall dwell in thy holy hill ?
 2 He that walketh uprightly, and worketh
 righteousness,
 And speaketh truth in his heart.
 3 He that slandereth not with his tongue,
 Nor doeth evil to his friend,
 Nor taketh up a reproach against his neigh-
 bour.

4 In whose eyes a reprobate is despised ;
 But he honoureth them that fear the LORD.
 He that sweareth to his own hurt, and chang-
 eth not.
 5 He that putteth not out his money to
 usury,
 Nor taketh reward against the innocent.
 He that doeth these things shall never be
 moved.

THIS Psalm of David corresponds so closely with portions of Psalm 24 that we can scarcely hesitate to refer it to the same occasion—viz., the location of the ark on Mount Zion (see 2 Sam. 6 and 1 Chr. 13). It was thus made the visible dwelling-place of Israel's God, and therefore would suggest the question, Who now shall be honored to dwell *with God* in this holy hill ? Who shall enjoy this exalted privilege of special communion and fellowship with God, and consequently of His perpetual protection ? This question it is the purpose of the Psalm to answer. As a description of the thoroughly righteous man it stands in direct contrast with Psalm 14, which is a corresponding description of an intensely wicked man. C.

1. The tent of Jehovah and His holy hill are thought of here in their spiritual character as the places of the Divine presence and of the community of God that has gathered round this ; and, accordingly, the sojourning and dwelling is not to be understood externally, but spiritually, with the setting aside and transcending of all limitations of space. This spiritual deepening of the Old Testament view is found also in 27 : 4, 5 ; 61 : 5 ; it is already implied where the notion of diligently visiting the sanctuary rises into that of permanently dwelling therein (65 : 5 ; 84 : 4, 5). D.

2, 3. The man with whom God will hold communion is now described, first as to what he is (v. 2), and then as to what he is not (v. 3). He *is* a man of whole heart and life, who does the will of God, and speaks the truth because he loves it ; it dwells in his heart, and he speaks it there first, before he speaks it with his tongue. "It is a beautiful order," says Luther. "First the person must be acceptable by cleanness ; then the work by righteousness ; then the word by truth. So God has regard to Abel (himself) first, and then to his gifts." He is *not* one who

injures others either by word or by deed, or by listening to and propagating slander. P.

2. Three features of character are indicated : his blameless walk, his acting in accordance with God's will, and his unfeigned truthfulness. D.—*Walking perfect, and doing right, and speaking truth, in his heart.* The Psalmist, speaking in behalf of God, here answers his own question. *Walking* is put for the habitual course of life. *Perfect*, complete as to all essential features of the character, without necessarily implying perfection in degree. The next phrase, *doing right*, practising rectitude, may be either a synonymous parallel to the first, or a specification under it, parallel to *speaking truth*. The general idea of walking perfect is then resolved into the two particular ideas of doing right and speaking truth. *In his heart*, i.e., sincerely, as opposed to outward show or hypocritical profession. This phrase seems to qualify not merely what precedes, *speaking truth*, but the whole description, as of one who sincerely and internally, as well as outwardly, leads a blameless life by doing right and speaking truth. A.

An external profession of faith and outward communion with the Church of God is not sufficient unto salvation, unless we lead an incorrupt life correspondent to the same, doing the thing which is right and speaking the truth in our heart. The marks are not to be taken from an outward hearing of the word or receiving of the sacraments, but from the duties of righteousness, giving every man his due, because the touchstone of piety toward God is charity toward our brother. "Herein," saith John, "are the children of God known, and the children of the devil : whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." *John Boys.*

The way of uprightness is the surest for de-

spatch, and the shortest cut toward the execution or attainment of any good purpose, securing a man from irksome expectations and tedious delays. It is fair and pleasant. He that walketh in it hath good weather and a clear sky about him ; a hopeful confidence and a cheerful satisfaction do ever wait upon him. Being conscious to himself of an honest meaning and a due course in prosecuting it, he feelth no check or struggling of mind, no regret or sting of heart. *Barrow*.—He walks steadily. A good conscience steers by fixed stars, and aims at fixed marks. An upright man is always the same man, and goes the same way ; the external state of things does not alter the moral reason of things with him, or change the law of God. *Sydney Smith*.—He hath no fear of being detected, or care to smother his intents. The upright man is secure as to his honor and credit ; he is sure not to come off disgracefully, either at home in his own approbation, or abroad in the estimation of men. *H. Smith*.—He hath perfect security as to the final result of his affairs, that he shall not be quite baffled in his expectations and desires. He shall prosper in the true notion of prosperity, explained by that Divine saying, “Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.” *Barrow*.

Speaketh truth in his heart. Worded truth or veracity, precious as it is, is but as the outside, as the husk of a more precious reality inside. Worded truth is the outside, and acted truth is the inner kernel. Just as words themselves are but the wordings of the inner man, the abundance of the heart speaking ; so truth in words is but the outer form, the external semblance, the visible shadow of truth in deeds, truth in life, truthful obedience, true concord in the heart between the acknowledged law and the will and deed of obedience. The essence of truth is in duty, in heart-whole devotion of duty to the sacred law of God’s truth. There is the source and spring of truthful words ; there is the fountain of true honor, of noble, generous, manly confidence ; there is the secret of self-respect, and with it of respect from others ; of everything which makes the character of man lofty, honorable, and angelic. *G. M.*

The pervading love of truth is the spirit which should regulate all of our opinions, the standard by which consistency is to be tried, the touchstone of intellectual integrity. Whatever doctrines or sentiments are not the results of its operation are prejudices, even should they chance not to be errors, and whatever

changes are effected through its energy and influence are elements of progress, and contribute to the real perfection of our nature. He only deserves the commendation of firmness of opinion who begins with the predominating love of truth, and maintains it steadily and sincerely in all the subsequent periods of his history. The uniform ascendancy of candor, or the love of truth, is the life and soul of the only species of consistency which a wise man desires to possess. . . . If there be a moral principle to which, in every form, humanity has given utterance, it is the obligation of veracity. Truth is alike the perfection of the intellect and the glory of the heart. *Thornwell*.

Truthfulness in the heart ! Perfect transparency in the soul’s acting toward itself, toward man and God ! What so beautiful, so near and like the acting of God Himself ! It is not merely abstinence from words and deeds of insincerity or deceit, but the sensitive recoil of the spirit from the *conception*, which permits not the harboring of the *thought* of falsehood or deception. This most beautiful, most godlike attribute of soul is the spring or quickener of all admirable qualities ; it prompts to all excellence and beneficence in the deeds of the life ; it is the foundation element of all greatness in human character, of all happiness in human doing. This speaking of truth to the heart and in the heart is that which is needed for our individual happiness, for the happiness of each household, for the welfare of our entire humanity. Practised by all men in all the relations of social intercourse, it would tend to make earth most like heaven. Above all, it is that which brings each soul nearer to and makes it liker God, and prepares it by His communicated grace for His high and holy dwelling-place. *B.*

3. (*Who*) *hath not slandered with his tongue, (who) hath not done his neighbor harm, and a scandal hath not taken up against his neighbor.* The positive description of the foregoing verse is now followed by a negative one. The social virtues are insisted on, and their opposites excluded, because they are apt to be neglected by hypocrites, against whom this Psalm is directed. *A.*

How thick do censures and reproaches fly in all places, at all tables, in all conventions ! And this were the more tolerable, if it were only the fault of ungodly men, of strangers and enemies to religion. But alas ! this plague is not only among the Egyptians, but Israelites, too. It is very doleful to consider how professors sharpen their tongues like swords against professors ; and one good man censures and re-

proaches another, and one minister traduceth another; and who can say, "I am clean from this sin?" *Poole*.—The good name of a man, as saith Solomon, is a precious thing to every one, and to be preferred before much treasure, insomuch that it is no less grievous to hurt a man with the tongue than with a sword; nay, oftentimes the stroke of a tongue is grievouser than the wound of a spear. And therefore the tongue must be bridled, that we hurt not in any wise the good name of our neighbor. *P. Baro*.

That panoply of sacred principle that lets no arrow of the adversary through any joint of its harness is the Christian's every-day garment. Every Christian cause is stronger for his hand and his tongue. No tempter is cunning enough to wring a scandal from his behavior. No neighbor shall hesitate on which side, in the grand division of the world, to reckon him. He is committed frankly. He is pledged irrevocably. He is consecrated manfully. If he is Christ's man, there is no situation, nor turn, nor emergency, where Christ is not honored in his life. And that because the Master's Spirit is in him. *F. D. H.*

Nor evil to friend, nor reproach against neighbor. If thou neglectest thy love to thy neighbor, in vain thou profess-est thy love to God; for by thy love to God the love to thy neighbor is begotten, and by the love to thy neighbor thy love to God is nourished. *Quarles*.—There is an element of power in the sweet habitude of mind that thinketh no evil and taketh up no reproach. Such people win their way everywhere. The door is open to them everywhere and every heart made ready. Their shadow always falls behind them, and their coming is only brightness. There are faces that are a benediction, and such faces create a great, sweet, compelling light around us while they are with us, and leave a long, quiet twilight in our memories after the sun-setting. *C. H. P.*

4, 5. Again, his character is further described by affirmations and negations. He is one who turns away from the evil and honors the good, who regards as inviolable the sanctity of an oath (not a casuist who sets himself to find a pretext for breaking his word, when it is inconvenient to keep it). He is *not* one who loves usury or takes bribes. The taking of usury is strictly forbidden in the law, and denounced by the prophets. Kimchi's casuistic distinction, that it is lawful for the Jew to take usury of strangers, but not of his own people, is very significant; and, like too many Christian, as well as Jewish, interpretations of Scrip-

ture, framed to support a convenient and profitable practice. Thus, in heart, in tongue, in actions, in his conduct, as a member of society, he is alike free from reproach. Such is the figure of stainless honor drawn by the pen of a Jewish poet. Christian chivalry has not dreamed of a brighter. We have need often and seriously to ponder it. For it shows us that faith in God and spotless integrity may not be sundered; that religion does not veil or excuse petty dishonesties; that love to God is only then worthy the name when it is the life and bond of every social virtue. Each line is, as it were, a touchstone to which we should bring ourselves. To speak truth in the heart—to take up no reproach against a neighbor—would not the Christian man be perfect of whom this could be said? And that other trait in this Divine character—"who honoreth them that fear the Lord"—is there a surer test of our spiritual condition than this, that we love and honor men *because they love Christ?* *P.*

4. He sweareth to his own hurt.

The Christian swears to his own hindrance, and changeth not; yet knoweth that his oath cannot tie him to sin. *Bacon*.—He keeps his word, whatever it may cost him. He is faithful to his obligations, regardless of any inconvenience, or trouble, or loss, resulting from his fidelity. A character marked by such faithfulness seems to be, as it were, a very fragment of the Rock of Ages; and on its firmness and stability all who know it can rest securely. *H. C. T.*

What care I to see a man run after a sermon, if he cozens and cheats as soon as he comes home? On the other side, morality must not be without religion, for if so it may change as I see convenience. Religion must govern it. He that has not religion to govern his morality is not a dram better than my mastiff-dog; so long as you stroke him and please him and do not pinch him, he will play with you as finely as may be, he is a very good moral mastiff; but if you hurt him he will fly in your face, and tear out your throat. *John Seldon*.

5. This usury is not interest on money which is borrowed to make more money with—a commercial transaction of which the Mosaic law had no occasion to speak; but is money loaned to a poor man as the law required bread to be loaned to the suffering, upon which no interest was permitted. In the current life of the Hebrew people, no man borrowed either money or bread save under the stress of hunger, necessity, of which stress no neighbor, well to do

himself, was permitted to take advantage. A bribe to harm the innocent was an abomination to the Mosaic law—is so to all righteous law—to every upright conscience. “Shall never be moved”—shall have a sure standing in the house of God, evermore enjoying His protection and never jostled from His sure foundation. C.

We nowhere learn from the institutes delivered by Moses that the simple taking of interest was forbidden to the Israelites; but the Divine law would give no countenance to the griping and extortionate practices to which miserly money lenders are always prone. The industrious poor might sometimes be reduced to such straits that pecuniary accommodations might be necessary to them; and toward such God would inculcate a kind and helpful spirit, and the precept is enforced by the relation which they sustained to Him: “Remember that you are lending to *My* people, *My* poor; and therefore take no advantage of their necessities. Trust Me against the fear of loss, and treat them kindly and generously.” *Bush*.—That the poor should receive compassion and help was a part of the judicial law which God appointed for the Jews in particular; but it is a common principle of justice, which extends to all nations and to all ages, that we should keep ourselves from plundering and devouring the poor who are in distress and want. Whence it follows that the gain which he acquires who lends his money upon interest, without doing injury to any one, is not to be included under the head of unlawful usury. *Calvin*.

He that doeth. 'Tis not said he that *professes* this or that, or he that *believes* thus and thus, or he that is of such or such an *opinion* or *way of worship*; 'tis not he that *hears* much or *talks* much of religion; no, nor he that *thinks* much of these things and *means well*; but 'tis he that “*doeth these things*”—that is actually employed about them—that is the religious and truly godly man. 'Tis not, I say, a formal *professor*, a wild *opinionist*, a high-flown *perfectist*; it is not a constant *hearer*, or a mighty *talker*, or a laborious *teacher*, or a *gifted brother*, or a simple *well-wisher* must pass; but 'tis the honest and sincere *doer* of these things that will abide the test and stand the trial. The harmless humor of *meaning well* is not enough to approve a man's spiritual state, to acquit obligations, or to ascertain his expectations. For He that bids us “eschew evil” does immediately subjoin that we must “follow” and “hold fast that which is good.” It will be no good account not to have done evil, unless we

make it appear that we have been doing good too; since the non-commission of great sins will not excuse our omission of great duties. *A. Littleton*.

And now that his character is fully described, instead of concluding, such an one may sojourn, etc., the closing sentence is shaped otherwise, in conformity with the spiritual meaning of the Psalmist's question, one that doeth thus shall never be moved, he stands fast, being upheld by Jehovah, hidden in His fellowship; nothing from without, no misfortune, can overthrow him. D.—Instead of “he that doeth these things shall dwell in the house of Jehovah,” etc., the answer is varied in form, “shall never be moved,” which is, in fact, the same truth in another and larger form. Such a man may not take up his dwelling in the earthly courts of the Lord; but, at least, he shall so live in the presence of God, and under the care of God, that his feet shall be upon a rock.

The Epistle of James is the New Testament expansion of and comment upon this Psalm. For another treatment of the subject in the Old, see Isa. 33: 13-16. P.

The citizen of Zion is one that is conscientiously honest and just in all his dealings, faithful and fair to all with whom he has to do. He *worketh righteousness*; he walks in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord, and takes care to give all their due; is just both to God and man; and in speaking to both, he speaks that which is *the truth in his heart*; his prayers, professions, and promises to God come not out of feigned lips, nor dares he tell a lie, or so much as equivocate, in his converse or commerce with men. He walks by the rules of righteousness and truth, and scorns and abhors the gains of injustice and fraud; he reckons that that cannot be a good bargain, nor a saving one, which is made with a lie, and that he who wrongs his neighbor, though ever so plausibly, will prove in the end to have done the greatest injury to himself. He is one that values men by their virtue and piety, and not by the figure they make in the world. He thinks the better of no man's wickedness for his grandeur. *In his eyes a vile person is contemned*. He thinks the worse of no man's piety for his poverty, *but he knows them that fear the Lord*. He reckons that serious piety, wherever it is found, puts an honor upon a man, and makes his face to shine, more than wealth, or wit, or a great name among men does or can. He is one that always prefers a good conscience before

any secular interest or advantage whatsoever ; for if he has promised upon oath to do anything, though afterward it appear much to his damage and prejudice in his worldly estate, yet he adheres to it and changes not. He is one that will not increase his estate by any unjust practices. Not by extortion. *He putteth not out his money to usury*, that he may live at ease upon the labors of others, while he is in a capacity for improving it by his own industry. Not by bribery. He will not take a reward against the innocent ; if he be any way employed in the administration of public justice, he will not for any gain, or hope of it, to himself, do anything to the prejudice of a righteous cause.

The Psalm concludes with a ratification of this character of the citizen of Zion. He is like Zion-hill itself, which cannot be moved, but abides forever (125 : 1). Every true living member of the Church, like the Church itself, is built upon a Rock, which the gates of hell cannot prevail against. *He that doeth these things shall never be moved* ; shall not be moved forever, so the word is. The grace of God shall always be sufficient for him, to preserve him safe and blameless to the heavenly kingdom ; temptations shall not overcome him, troubles shall not overwhelm him, nothing shall rob him of his present peace or his future bliss. H.

To engage in the performance of home duties faultlessly, without petulance, without haste, without fretting—to repress the sarcastic and unkind word, to be calm in the hot moment of anger, to do without weariness, and to suffer without murmuring, to be charitable in judgment and trample out of the heart the Pharisee spirit, deeming life at once too short and too costly for quarrels and for pride ; to maintain a chivalrous honor in all business relations ; to hold back from the temptations of doubtful or hasty gain ; to wear “the white flower,” not “of a blameless life” only, but of a life cleansed from its earthliness and made pure by the Holy Spirit ; to walk about the world and before men with a calm brow, conscious of integrity, and with a kind heart filled with love ; to shed abroad the “sweet savor of Christ,” and allure men to the heaven to which they know you to

be travelling—these are but many-sided exhibitions of the one holy character, many facets of the one jewel of fidelity by which you are to be “approved” of your Father, which is in heaven. *Punshon.*

In real life, up to the limit of his culture, a thoroughbred Christian is a thoroughbred gentleman. He cannot do a mean thing. He will not equivocate. The stories he tells are not elastic. He will not hang his veracity on the difference between the singular and the plural of a word. His word weighs on his conscience like an oath ; he knows no difference. At the custom house his oath is as trusty as in the witness-box. In either, he is not conveniently afflicted with an intermittent memory. His silences he regulates by religious principles as honorably as his speech. *Phelps.*

It is almost a definition of a gentleman to say that he is one who *never inflicts pain*. He carefully avoids whatever may cause a jar or a jolt in the mind of those with whom he is cast—all clashing of opinion or collision of feeling, all restraint or suspicion or gloom or resentment ; his great concern being to make every one at ease and at home. He has his eyes on all his company, he is tender toward the bashful, gentle toward the distant, and merciful toward the absurd. He can recollect to whom he is speaking ; he guards against unseasonable allusions on topics which may irritate ; he is seldom prominent in conversation, and never wearisome. He makes light of favors when he does them, and seems to be receiving when he is conferring. He never speaks of himself except when compelled, never defends himself by a mere retort ; he has no care for slander or gossip, is scrupulous in imputing motives to those who interfere with him, and interprets everything for the best. He is never mean or little in his disputes, never takes unfair advantages, never mistakes personalities or sharp sayings for arguments, or insinuates evil, which he dare not say out. From long-sighted prudence, he observes the maxim of the ancient sage, “That we should ever conduct ourselves toward our enemy as if he were one day to be our friend.” He has too much good sense to be affronted at insults, and is too well employed to remember injuries. *Newman.*

PSALM XVI.

MIGHTAM OF DAVID.

- 1 PRESERVE me, O God : for in thee do I put my trust.
- 2 I have said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord :
I have no good beyond thee.
- 3 As for the saints that are in the earth,
They are the excellent in whom is all my delight.
- 4 Their sorrows shall be multiplied that exchange *the* LORD for another *god* :
Their drink offerings of blood will I not offer,
Nor take their names upon my lips.
- 5 The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup :
Thou maintainest my lot.
- 6 The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places ;

- Yea, I have a goodly heritage.
- 7 I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel :
Yea, my reins instruct me in the night seasons.
- 8 I have set the LORD always before me :
Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.
- 9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth :
My flesh also shall dwell in safety.
- 10 For thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol ;
Neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption.
- 11 Thou wilt shew me the path of life :
In thy presence is fulness of joy :
In thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

THIS Psalm is remarkable for its evangelical spirit ; in none is the faith stronger, the hope, indeed the certainty, of immortal life, more fully developed. It is ascribed to David by Peter on two most solemn occasions. It is full of the spirit of David ; it is connected with the Psalms which precede and follow it by several thoughts and expressions ; and the style is recognized by critics usually captious in the question of Davidic authorship, as “belonging unquestionably to high antiquity,” and bearing clear traces of transactions in David’s reign. The freshness and vivid coloring, the warmth and brilliancy of imagery, may point to the early portion of David’s reign ere yet the dark cloud had fallen on his spirit ; not improbably soon after his peaceful settlement, “when the king sat in his house, and the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies” (2 Sam. 7 : 1). *Cook.*

The Psalm is bright with the utterance of a happiness which nothing earthly can touch. It expresses the conviction of a life rather than of any sudden emergency. The living God Himself is David’s portion and inheritance (vs. 5, 6) ; stands at his right hand (v. 8) ; is the joy of his heart now (v. 9), and will fill him with joy and gladness forevermore. P.—Through-out the whole Psalm there reigns a settled calm, an inward joy and a joyous assurance, which is certain that everything it may desire for the

present and for the future it possesses in its God. D.

1. My Lord. There is a whole world between the man to whom God’s revelation consists in certain doctrines given to us by Jesus Christ, and the man to whom it consists in that Christ Himself. Grasping a living person is not the same as accepting a proposition. True, the propositions are about Him, and we do not know Him without them. But equally true, we need to be reminded that *He* is our Saviour and not *they*, and that God has revealed Himself to us not in words and sentences, but in a life. A. M.

2. The Psalmist knows no fountain of true happiness save Jehovah ; in Him he has everything ; his treasure is in heaven.

3. The saints, and none but they, are also the illustrious in his estimation. His whole delight is in them ; all his affection and esteem are bestowed upon them. D.—By David’s language, there were many singular saints in his day. *The saints that are in the earth, the excellent, in whom is all my delight.* Was it so then, and should it not be so now ? If we live in a more glorious dispensation, should we not maintain a more glorious conversation ? *Secker.*

Saints are not people living in cloisters after a fantastic ideal, but men and women immersed in the vulgar work of every-day life and worried by the small prosaic anxieties which fret us all,

who amid the whir of the spindle in the mill, and the clink of the scales on the counter, and the hubbub of the market-place, and the jangle of the courts are yet living lives of conscious devotion to God. The root idea of the word, which is an Old Testament word, is not moral purity, but separation to God. The holy things of the old covenant were things set apart from ordinary use for His service. So, on the high-priest's mitre was written Holiness to the Lord. So the Sabbath was kept "holy," because set apart from the week in obedience to Divine command. *Sanctity* and *saint* are used now mainly with the idea of moral purity, but that is a secondary meaning. The real primary signification is separation to God. Consecration to Him is the root from which the white flower of purity springs most surely. There is a deep lesson in the word as to the true method of attaining cleanness of life and spirit. We cannot make ourselves pure, but we can yield ourselves to God, and the purity will come. But we have not only here the fundamental idea of holiness, and the connection of purity of character with self-consecration to God, but also the solemn obligation on all so-called Christians thus to separate and devote themselves to Him. We are Christians as far as we give ourselves up to God, in the surrender of our will and the practical obedience of our lives—so far and not one inch farther. We are not merely bound to this consecration if we are Christians, but we are not Christians unless we thus consecrate ourselves. Pleasing self, and making my own will my law, and living for my own ends, is destructive of all Christianity. Saints are not an eminent sort of Christians, but all Christians are saints, and he who is not a saint is not a Christian. The true consecration is the surrender of the will, which no man can do for us, which needs no outward ceremonial, and the one motive which will lead us selfish and stubborn men to bow our necks to that gentle yoke, and to come out of the misery of pleasing self into the peace of serving God, is drawn from the great love of Him who devoted Himself to God and man, and bought us for His own by giving Himself utterly to be ours. All sanctity begins with consecration to God. All consecration rests upon the faith of Christ's sacrifice. And if, drawn by the great love of Christ to us unworthy, we give ourselves away to God in Him, then He gives Himself in deep sacred communion to us. "I am Thine" has ever for its chord which complete the fulness of its music, "Thou art mine." And so "saint" is a name of dignity

and honor, as well as a stringent requirement. A. M.

4. What did the grove of a demon-god conceal? Lust—blood—imposture. What sounds shook the fane? Alternate screams of anguish, and the laughter of mad votaries. What was the priest? The teacher of every vice of which his god was the patron and the example. What were the worshippers? The victims of every woe which superstition and sensuality can gender, and which cruelty can cherish. It was not then a blind national prejudice, any more than it was spiritual arrogancy, that made the prophet-poet and king of Israel exult in the distinction of his people. Rather it was a righteous scorn which made him exclaim, when he thought of the errors of the nations, "Their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer, neither take their names into my lips." I. T.

5, 6. Jehovah is my chosen portion, mine inheritance—the good which my soul rejoices in far above all other. These several words, "inheritance," "cup," "lot," concur in the common idea of one's chosen and accepted good. So in the same sense, "the lines," *i.e.*, the measuring lines which lay out one's grounds and define his landed possessions—taken from the vocabulary of an agricultural people to signify the possessions themselves. C.

5. *The Lord is our portion.* What a large possession have we then! There is no confiscation of it, no banishment from it. Our portion fills heaven and earth, and is infinitely above heaven and below earth, and beyond both. D. *Clarkson.*—God Himself is His greatest gift. The loftiest blessing which we can receive is that we should be heirs, possessors of God. "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance," says David. "Ye are heirs of God," echoes Paul. On earth and in heaven the "heritage of the children of the Lord" is God Himself, inasmuch as He is with them for their delight, in them to make them "partakers of a Divine nature," and for them in all His attributes and actions. A. M.—"What must not he possess," says Savonarola, "who possesses the Possessor of all?" In the words of Paul, "All things are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." P.

6. An allusion to the ancient custom of marking out plots of land by measuring-lines. See the same phrase, Josh. 17:5. The line was said to "fall" as being "thrown" by lot. P.—The measuring-lines have fallen to him in a delightful district—viz., in the fellowship of God which is so rich in enjoyment; this most blessed domain of love has become his paradisaic

possession. He rises from the fact to the full satisfaction that it affords him ; such an inheritance even seems beautiful in his eyes ; he has an intense delight therein. D.—This possession is as sure as God can make it. “Thou maintainest my lot.” The Divine power surrounds the man who chooses God for his heritage, and nothing shall take that heritage from him. He will help us, so that no temptations shall have power to make us rob *ourselves* of our treasure. And the man who thus elects to find his treasure and delight in God is satisfied with his choice. A. M.

All things are his, as they will subserve his best interests in time and eternity—God being both the Judge and the Director of all. If health, if riches, if honor will promote his real good, they are his. If sickness, if poverty, if obscurity or reproach will be good for him, they are his. Pardon to remove his guilt, grace to aid him in the performance of duty, strength to sustain him under trials, fears and doubts and perplexities enough to keep him watchful, every needful supply for his temporal and spiritual well-being in time, immortal life and glory in the world to come. Thus everything in God and in creation, everything in time and everything in eternity, so far as the least value pertains to it, is the Christian’s. Such is his heritage—such his all-sufficient portion. God and the created universe are his. N. W. Taylor.—With Christ he hath *all things* which are subservient to the purposes for which Christ was *delivered*: pardon to remove his guilt ; grace to aid him in the performance of duty ; comfort to support him under the pressure of affliction ; every needful supply during his journey through this world, and immortal life and happiness in the next. Hath not the Christian then “a goodly heritage,” who hath God and the creature, grace and glory, time and eternity ; who is safe among enemies as well as among friends ; who lives in communion with God on earth, and shall dwell with Him in heaven forevermore ? R. Walker.

7. I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel. The Holy Ghost is a spirit of counsel, powerfully instructing and convincingly teaching how to act and walk, for He directs us to set right steps, and to walk with a right foot, and thereby prevents us of many a sin, by seasonable instruction set on upon our hearts with a strong hand ; as Isaiah says, He is the spirit of counsel and of might : of counsel to direct ; of might to strengthen the inner man. Goodwin.—In the quiet of its silent hours, undisturbed by the passions,

and unharassed by the conflicts of the world, we can commune with our own heart, and be instructed and guarded as to our future course even “*in the night season.*” David especially seems to have made these seasons sources of great profit as well as delight. Sometimes he loved to meditate upon God as he lay upon his bed ; and it was no doubt as he meditated on the Lord’s goodness, and on the way by which He had led him, that he was, as it were, constrained, even at midnight, to arise and pray. While, therefore, we acknowledge the pillow to be a good counsellor, let us with David here acknowledge also that it is the Lord who gives the counsel, and sends the instruction in the night season. *Bouchier.*

8. I have set the Lord before me, at one time as well as another. In every place, in every condition, in every company, in every employment, and in every enjoyment, I have set the Lord equally before me ; and this raised him, and this will raise any Christian, by degrees, to a great height of holiness. T. Brooks.—Setting God before our face carries with it a *power of growth*. God is not only always before us, He is always *going* before us, and beckoning us to follow. A man who has God always before him cannot be stationary. The vision of God ever draws us onward with sweet and powerful allurements. And the *keeping* of God constantly before the face engenders *hope*. Hope, if we are to believe Paul, is the very atmosphere in which a Christian lives and breathes. “We are saved in hope.” V.

Bring God to the throne by placing Him in the chief purpose of a man, and at once He begins to take on reality. Cultivate the thought of Him by worship, and He seems yet more real. Act with direct aim to please Him, and every such act makes Him stand forth more distinctly. Pray to Him much, take Him into all your plans, ask His aid in the whole of life, and gradually He becomes a perpetual presence, and the most real of all beings. W. W. Patton.—We need more—far more—still communion with our Master. For want of it our energy is feverish, our patience soon exhausted, our devotion lacking in depth, our hopes in brightness, our whole lives in calmness. By all these motives, so strongly woven together in the words of our text, and by many more, we are called to the constant effort to “set the Lord always before us,” and, turning our happy thoughts to Him, even in the midst of our daily duties, to “walk all the day long in the light of His countenance.” A. M.

To live day by day upon God is to keep close

to Him ; is to live in constant thought of Him, and of our need of Him and of His grace ; is to put ourselves in the best possible position, and the likelihood of the best possible mood, to receive His blessing, and secure the benign guardianship of His love. As a rule, when we are in our best condition spiritually—most contrite, humble, earnest to do good, anxious to grow in grace, and to glorify God—we are living day by day upon Him ; feeling every morning that His joy must be our strength and stay ; feeling every night that it has been in Him that we have lived and moved and had our being, since the dawn ; and so abiding in Him with a constant and habitual reference to Him as the God in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways. Especially is this day-by-day life in God dear to us in periods of marked temptation or peculiar trial. Under every disappointment the perfect Saviour must ever be the model of the imperfect Christian, because he knows that though he cannot reach the standard set by Christ, yet, by constantly striving toward it, he shall reach a higher degree of holiness and purity than he would have been able to attain had he imitated anything short of perfection. Let not the Christian despair because he cannot get rid altogether of his sinfulness. We are not meant to get rid altogether of our sinfulness. Earth is not heaven. It is a place of pilgrimage and warfare and struggle. *Anon.*

He that by faith eyes God continually as his protector in trouble "*shall not be moved*" with any evil that he suffers, and he that eyes God by faith as his pattern in holiness shall not be moved from doing that which is good. This thought—*the Lord is at our right hand*—keeps us from turning either to the right hand or to the left. *Caryl.*

9. My heart, my glory (*i.e.*, soul), **my flesh** ; in other words, the whole man. P. —We have thus in this passage the threefold division of man's nature : the heart, as the seat of the understanding ; the soul, as the abode of spiritual instincts ; and the flesh, or body. Each has its own blessing ; even the lowest is secure of endurance ; for though the words "*shall rest in hope*" mean primarily "*will dwell in security*," or "*confidence*," that confidence involves the thought of permanence or restoration. David, speaking *as a prophet* (Acts 2 : 30), uses words which point to another life. *Cook.*

10. He now assigns the ground or reason of the confidence expressed in the preceding verse. "I am sure my soul and body will be safe, be-

cause Thou canst not, without ceasing to be God and my God, give me up to the destroyer." He does not say *leave in*, but *to*, *i.e.*, abandon to, give up to the dominion or possession of another. The same Hebrew phrase occurs, with the same sense, in Lev. 19 : 10 ; Job 39 : 14, and in Psalm 49 : 10. The Hebrew *Sheol* and the Greek *Hades*, the invisible world or state of the dead. A.

8-10. This passage is quoted by Peter as directly, or in its highest sense, applicable to the Messiah. It contains one of the very clearest and strongest declarations of belief in a blessed futurity which can be adduced from the Old Testament. As such it is recognized by ancient and modern interpreters, none speaking out more clearly than Ewald : "It goes beyond other words of David, nor is anything corresponding to it found in later Hebrew writers." There is but one adequate explanation of such a fact—*viz.*, that the Spirit of Christ, which was in David as a prophet (see 1 Pet. 1 : 11), moved and controlled his utterances, so that, while they expressed fully his own yearnings, they *signified beforehand the glory that should follow* in the resurrection of Christ. *Cook.*

That we have here a *conscious* prediction on the part of David is distinctly affirmed by Peter, speaking under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2 : 30, 31). The language which he uses is very remarkable. Alleging vs. 8-11 in proof of the resurrection of Christ, he tells us that David here spoke as a prophet ; that he *knew* that his great descendant would be the Messiah, and that God would place Him on His throne ; and that he *foresaw* and spake of the resurrection of Christ. It is plain from all this that, according to Peter's view, David not only uttered words which *might* be applied to Christ, but that he used prophetic—that is, inspired language, and knew himself that he was prophesying. But we may still allow a primary and lower reference of the words to David himself, without lessening their prophetic import ; in some parts even an exclusive reference, for it is not necessary (and, indeed, seems scarcely possible) to refer the *whole* Psalm to Christ, because a part of it points to Him. P.

The application which the apostles make of this Psalm (Acts 2 : 29-32 ; 13 : 35-37) is based upon the consideration that David's hope not to fall a prey to death was not realized in him to the unlimited extent in which the Psalm sets it forth, but that it was fulfilled in Jesus, who was not abandoned to Hades, and whose flesh did not experience the corruption of the grave ;

and that consequently the words of the Psalm are a prophecy of David pointing to Jesus the Christ, who was promised to him as the heir of his throne, and whom, on the ground of this promise, he had before him in prophetic consciousness. D.

Corruption. The Septuagint Greek word, meaning corruption, passed into the New Testament and received the practical indorsement of the apostles because they made their main argument from prophecy for the resurrection of Christ turn on this precise sense of our word. The authorities are therefore quite decisive in favor of the meaning here, *corruption*. In this construction the sentiment is every way appropriate. It was fit that the Great Conqueror of death should burst its bands and come forth from its control before even His body had experienced that decomposition by which death and the grave despoil the beauty of man and remand his flesh back to dust. Of this the Messiah was made sure on the authority of prophetic inspiration. His own words to His disciples long before His death show that He knew He should rise from the dead and even on the third day, before corruption had really begun its work (see Matt. 16 : 21 and 20 : 19). C.

He who in soul and body was pre-eminently God's "Holy One" was loosed from the pains of death because it was not possible that He should be holden of it. This is noble encouragement to all the saints; die they must, but rise they shall, and though in their case they shall see corruption, yet they shall rise to everlasting life. Christ's resurrection is the cause, the earnest, the guarantee, and the emblem of the rising of all His people. Let them, therefore, go to their graves as to their beds, resting their flesh among the clods as they now do upon their couches. S.

11. Not to fall a prey to Hades and corruption is only the external side of that which David hopes for himself; on its inward side it is a blessed and glorious life in the other world. The second half of v. 11 consists of two members, and depicts this life which he so confidently expects. D.

The path of life. Not merely the life of the body. This is shown by the pleasure and the joy spoken of afterward, which are to be found in God's presence, and in communion with Him. *Life*, in the only true sense, is union with God; and from that springs, of necessity, the idea of immortality. It seems impossible to suppose that David, who here expresses such a fulness of confidence in God, such a living, personal relationship to Him,

could have ever dreamed that such a relationship would end with death. Our Lord's words to the Sadducees apply here with especial force. "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. They to whom God has made Himself known, they who are one with Him, cannot lose that Divine life of which they are made partakers." At the same time, in the utterance of this confident persuasion and hope, David was carried beyond himself. He spake as a prophet, *knowing* that God had promised of the fruit of his body to raise up Christ to sit on his throne. The hope of his own immortality was based upon, and bound up in, the life of Him who was at once his Son and his Lord. What was true of David in the lower sense was true in the fullest and highest sense of Christ—was only true of David because it was true of Christ; and is only true of any of us in and through Him, according to His own words, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Briefly, then, it must be said that vs. 9-11, so far as they refer to David, express his confidence in God's protecting care in this life and his hope of a life to come. But as a prophecy of Christ they mean all that is drawn from them by Peter and Paul. In Christ's deliverance from the grave and His resurrection, the whole fulness of their meaning is exhausted. P.

Hades could not detain Him who was to "lead its captivity captive;" and ere "His flesh should see corruption," He was to burst the bars of the prison, and return to the light of day; and thence ascending, should enter upon the fulness of joy. The Mediator is the *Precursor* of His people, on this "Path of Life," and an experienced Guide also in its dangers. In all things "He has the *precedency*," and advances in front of the host He is leading to the skies. By the right, both of conquest and experience, He exercises "domination over the dead and the living." There is no hazard of error in thus assigning its specific sense to the prophetic words of David; for the chief of the apostles, under the fresh influence of the Divine Spirit, applies and expounds them as fulfilled in none but Jesus—the Christ. I. T.

In Thy presence is fulness of joy; in Thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore. Mark, for quality, there are *pleasures*; for quantity, *fulness*; for dignity, *at God's right hand*; for eternity, *forevermore*. The joy of the saints in heaven is never ebbing, but always flowing to all contentment. The joys of heaven never fade, never wither, never die, nor never are lessened nor interrupted. The joy of the saints in heaven is

a constant joy, an everlasting joy, in the root and in the cause, and in the matter of it and in the objects of it. "Their joy lasts forever whose objects remain forever." *T. Brooks.*

We know that this mortal shall put on immortality, and that the body of the believer is to be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body. The Christian shall see Christ, shall behold His glory, shall be like Him, shall be welcomed into the joy of his Lord. Faith will become sight and hope fruition. Now he knows in part, but then shall he know even as also he is known. He will sin no more, sorrow no more. His inheritance is incorruptible, undefiled and fadeth not away. Tears are wiped away from all faces. Entering heaven, the weary finds rest, the wanderer a home, and the pilgrim leaves his tent for a city that hath foundations. Earth's sinning Christians shall wear white robes. Earth's sorrowing disciples shall waken notes of joy from harps of gold. *F. L. Patton.*

The saints on earth are all but wayfaring men, wandering pilgrims far from home; but the saints in heaven are safely arrived at the end of their journey. All we here are but strangers in the midst of danger, we are losing ourselves and losing our lives in the land of the dying. But ere long we may find our lives and ourselves again in heaven with the Lord of life, being found of Him in the land of the living. "*Fulness of joy.*" In heaven they can want nothing unless it be want itself. They may find the want of evil, but never feel the evil of want. Evil is but the want of good, and the want of evil is but the absence of want. God is good, and no want of good can be in God. What want then can be endured in the presence of God, where no evil is, but all good, that the fulness of joy may be enjoyed? "*In Thy presence, is.*" *There it is*, not *there it was*, nor *there it will be*, but *there it is* without cessation or intercision, there it always hath been, is and must be. It is an assertion *æternæ veritatis*—that is, always true. "In Thy presence is the fulness of joy;" and herein consists the consummation of felicity; for what measure of joy can any man wish for more than fulness of joy? And where would any man wish to enjoy this fulness of joy rather than in the presence of God, which is the ever-flowing and the overflowing fountain of joy? And when would any man wish for this enjoyment of the fulness of joy in the very fountain of joy rather than presently, constantly, and incessantly? Now all these desirables make up the consummation of true felicity. *Willan.*

The lawless or frivolous pleasures of man-

kind are only *an ill sense* put upon the language of nature. Let but the joy we seek be of celestial quality, and our pleasures such as ennoble and invigorate the soul, and then the true and ultimate purpose of existence is attained. Fulness of joy and perpetuity of pleasure were assuredly proposed as the *end* of that creation of which absolute Beneficence is the author. Who can question that the several gradations of the intelligent universe rise in degrees of enjoyment, as they rise in degrees of power and virtue; that at each ascent there is less of what is subservient and more of what is primary; less toil and danger, and more tranquillity and joy? And thus must the progression advance, even to the mount of God—the Royal abode of eternal and unsullied Blessedness. I. T.—Our small measures could not contain that "fulness of joy." There the vessel will be inconceivably dilated; the body will be "raised in power," like that of angels who "excel in strength," endued with immortal vigor—with adamantine energy; the eye will be strengthened to behold those beams of Divine effulgence which, were they to be manifested to us now, would blind us with their blaze! The ear will be fitted to receive, the voice to respond, those eternal hallelujahs! Every cloud will be dispelled from the mind; every imperfection of its powers removed: "we shall see face to face, and know as we are known." There will exist a totally different scale of faculties, adapted to the magnitude of the objects to be comprehended—to the inconceivable splendors of the beatific vision! *R. Hall.*

It ought to be assumed that the shoreless ocean of the Divine Felicity contains elements, and combinations of those elements, which utterly surpass all finite knowledge. And then the fact of such unsearchable depths being admitted, as a necessary deduction of reason, there will be open to created minds the peculiar emotion naturally springing up when, with the boundless radiance of Infinite Blessedness full in view, it is recollected that a vast unknown remains beyond and within that visible glory! Herein is comprehended a provision, never to be exhausted, for supplying new enjoyments to pure and intelligent beings. It is evident that to active natures, endowed with the power and desire of advancement, the eras of protracted duration must impart continually fresh accessions of capacity for discerning the perfections of the Infinite God. That which might not at all be known or conceived of in an early stage may be comprehended in a stage more advanced; and thus the Boundless Felicity which

none shall ever fathom will be to all, and forever, a spring of perpetual pleasures. I. T.

Forevermore. Eternity makes heaven to be heaven ; 'tis the diamond in the ring. O blessed day that shall have no night ! the sunlight of glory shall rise upon the soul and never set ! O blessed spring that shall have no autumn or fall of the leaf ! Its joys are eternal.

Watson.—The enjoyments above, and the treasures proposed to us by our Saviour, are indefectible in their nature, and endless in their duration. They are still full, fresh, and entire, like the stars and orbs above, which shine with the same undiminished lustre, and move with the same unwearyed motion, with which they did from the first date of their creation. Nay, the joys of heaven will abide when these lights of heaven shall be put out ; and when sun and moon, and nature itself, shall be discharged their stations and be employed by Providence no more, the righteous shall then appear in their full glory ; and, being fixed in the Divine presence, enjoy one perpetual and everlasting day—a day commensurate to the unlimited eternity of God Himself, the great Sun of Righteousness, who is always rising, and never sets. *South.*

That which crowns all is, that the life above is eternal. This satisfies all our desires and excludes all our fears ; for unchangeableness is an inseparable attribute of perfect felicity. The blessed are in full communion with God, the fountain of life, and Christ the prince of life. “ Because I live,” saith our Saviour, “ ye shall live also.” What can interrupt, much less put an end to the happiness of the saints ? The love of God is immutably fixed upon them, and their love upon Him. Here their love is subject to decays and gradual alienations ; as the needle in the compass, though it always has a tendency to the North Pole, yet sometimes it declines, and has its variations. But in heaven the love of the saints is directly and constantly set upon God. The light of His countenance governs all their affections. It is as impossible to divert their desires from Him, as to cause one that is inflamed with thirst to leave a clear flowing spring for a noisome puddle. In short, heaven is filled with eternal hallelujahs ; for there is no appearance of sin, no shadow of death there ; all miseries are vanished, and all that is desirable is possessed by the saints ; the circle of their employment is to enjoy and praise the Divine goodness forever. *Bates.*

Death is not the end, but the beginning. It is not loss, but gain. It is not into darkness, but into marvellous light. It is not to silence

and stillness, but into life far more real and active. It is not away from joy and gladness and beauty, but is out of the mere hints and shadows and hopes of blessedness into the full revelation of Christ, into His very presence, where there is fulness of joy, where there are pleasures forevermore. We see hints and gleams, and we have glimpses now and then, of far more glorious life than we have yet reached. The highest attainments here are but the beginnings of sanctified life. The peace, joy, love, unselfishness, service, purity, holiness, reached in the ripest experiences of earthly sainthood are only dim intimations of what we may become—ay, of what we shall become. Our life is hid, concealed, with Christ in God. . . . Since we are to be some day like Christ, we should grow every day in grace ; we should be getting ever a little more like Christ in feeling, in temper, in disposition, in affection ; our aim should be to bring every thought and emotion and desire into sweet subjection to Christ. We should not only cherish the blessed vision, but should seek daily to grow into its Divine beauty. J. R. M.

We may cherish the hope of a social heaven. Man's course begins in a garden, but it ends in a city. The final condition will be the perfection of human society. There all who love Christ will be drawn together, and old ties, broken for a little while here, be reknit in yet holier form, never to be parted more. The all-important question for each of us is how may we have such a hope, like a great sunset light shining into the western windows of our souls ? If you can humbly say, To me to live is Christ, then is it well. Living by Him, we may be ready quietly to lie down when the time comes, and may have all the future filled with the blaze of a great hope that glows brighter as the darkness thickens. That peaceful hope will not leave us till consciousness fails, and then when it has ceased to guide us Christ Himself will lead us, scarcely knowing where we are, through the waters, and when we open our half-bewildered eyes in brief wonder, the first thing we see will be His welcoming smile, and His voice will say, as a tender surgeon might to a little child waking after an operation, “ It is all over.” We lift our hands wondering, and find wreaths on our brows. We lift our eyes, and lo ! all about us a crowned crowd of conquerors,

“ And with the morn those angel faces smile
Which we have loved long since, and lost
awhile.”

A. M.

Every image which denotes the purest joy is introduced into the apostle's description of the ultimate blessedness of the redeemed. They are clad in white, the wedding garments of a great festivity. Music is the natural utterance of their delight. Nor is this a strained and artificial expression. It is full-toned chorus; it is hearty praise; it is jubilant adoration. There is waving of incense from golden censers. There is the lifting up of triumphant palms. There is the casting of golden crowns at the feet of the enthroned. There is "the voice of harpers harping with their harps." And the song of multitudes, whom no man can number, ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, is as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and as that doxology of the Redeemer waxes louder and fuller, the very pillars and arches of heaven are tremulous with joy. Divested of all that is tropical and symbolical in form, the one idea conveyed to us is that the climacteric of redemption is *full, irrepressible, eternal joy*. A religion which falls short of positive and un-failing pleasure, as the ultimate law of life, cannot meet the necessities of humanity. Redemption is an advance on creation. It more than regains what was lost, more than restores what was original. The burden of that heavenly song is *salvation, blessing, and thanksgiving*. The second Paradise is better than Eden. The joy of man redeemed, restored, and perfected

is greater than that of man in the glory of his innocence. *W. Adams.*

The immortal welfare of the soul, supreme and consummate, will never have been realized till it is reconciled with its Maker through faith in Christ and repentance from sin; till in it has been developed and cultivated a godlike character, such as was revealed, present and personal, through the incarnation of Christ and through His subsequent work and suffering; till there have been unfolded in it those grandest faculties, not as yet fully revealed, in which the condition and the basis are shown of a glory that we cannot yet comprehend; till we have thus become prepared for the largest operation, the grandest offices, which even immortality shall open to us. All this is implied in God's amazing constitution of our being. And as the fruit of all these comes the last element essential to the perfect well-being of the soul—a *constant, sweet, and immortal felicity* in the presence of God, in sympathy with Him and with the seraphim and saints who are gathered about Him; a felicity that shall flow like a river in the soul, deep and bright, filling it with its rich experience; a felicity that shall be as a shining atmosphere around that soul, beneath whose radiance all spiritual graces shall start forth and flourish; in whose inspiration each voice shall be one of constant song, and every thought of joy and praise! And that well-being shall be as eternal as the being of God Himself! *R. S. S.*

PSALM XVII.

A PRAYER OF DAVID.

- 1 HEAR the right, O LORD, attend unto my cry;
Give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips.
- 2 Let my sentence come forth from thy presence;
Let thine eyes look upon equity.
- 3 Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night;
Thou hast tried me, and findest nothing;
I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.
- 4 As for the works of men, by the word of thy lips
I have kept me from the ways of the violent.

- 5 My steps have held fast to thy paths,
My feet have not slipped.
- 6 I have called upon thee, for thou wilt answer me, O God:
Incline thine ear unto me, *and* hear my speech.
- 7 Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness, O thou that savest them which put their trust *in thee*
From those that rise up *against them*, by thy right hand.
- 8 Keep me as the apple of the eye,
Hide me under the shadow of thy wings,
- 9 From the wicked that spoil me,

- My deadly enemies, that compass me about.
 10 They are inclosed in their own fat :
 With their mouth they speak proudly.
 11 They have now compassed us in our
 steps :
 They set their eyes to cast *us* down to the
 earth.
 12 He is like a lion that is greedy of his prey,
 And as it were a young lion lurking in secret
 places.
 13 Arise, O LORD,
 Confront him, cast him down :

IN this Psalm a servant of God, conscious of his own uprightness, and surrounded by enemies, prays to be kept from the evil world, and from evil men who persecute him ; and then from the dark present looks forward with joy to the bright future. Every tried and tempted servant of God may find in it the touchstone whereby to prove himself ; the sure refuge whither to betake himself ; the hope which is the anchor of the soul, and which entereth within the veil. The Psalm may be, as the inscription states, a Psalm of David ; and if so, we may probably attribute its composition to the time of Saul's persecution. It may be divided into three strophes :

I. The Psalmist's confidence in his appeal to God (vs. 1-5). This is based upon the righteousness of his cause, and the absence of all hypocrisy in his prayer (vs. 1, 2). The consciousness of this integrity further declared, and that even on the closest scrutiny. Both heart (v. 3) and life (vs. 4, 5) are free from reproach, notwithstanding the evil by which he is surrounded.

II. Prayer to be kept in the evil world (vs. 6-12). The appeal to God's marvellous loving-kindness and tender affection, that he may be protected against his enemies. The description of their bitterness (v. 9), their pride (v. 10), and their relentless persecution (vs. 11, 12) is then given.

III. Prayer that the sword of Jehovah may overtake his enemies (v. 13). And then the broad contrast, not without its consolation ; their portion, at the best, is for this life, and then perishes ; mine is in the presence and the vision of God, and, therefore, cannot be taken from me (vs. 14, 15). P.

Psalm 17 is placed immediately after Psalm 16 because it likewise concludes with the hope of a blessed and soul-satisfying vision of God. In other respects also the two Psalms have much in common. D.

- Deliver my soul from the wicked by thy
 sword ;
 14 From men, by thy hand, O LORD,
 From men of the world, whose portion is in
this life,
 And whose belly thou fillest with thy treasure:
 They are satisfied with children,
 And leave the rest of their substance to their
 babes.
 15 As for me, I shall behold thy face in right-
 eousness :
 I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy
 likeness.

This Psalm is called "a prayer ;" how appropriately we have but to glance through it to see. It is full of petition—of strong, clear pleading, intense and passionate, such as rises only from scenes of danger, such as comes only out of a *sufferer's* heart. It is called a prayer of *David*. Who, indeed, except David, had such experiences of "suffering" and "danger," and such susceptibilities to be touched and wrung by them, as have expression in this Psalm ? We owe our whole salvation to the suffering of Christ ; but, in a secondary sense, how much also do we receive from or through the sufferings of men ! The world will never know, until its whole history is reviewed and all its mysteries explained, how much instruction, comfort, incitement have flowed from the trials and sufferings of this one man. In this respect David [and Job] and Paul have done more for the race than perhaps any men who ever lived. *Raleigh*.

1. *The right*, righteousness or justice in the abstract, here put for a just cause, or perhaps for one who is in the right, who has justice on his side. The prayer that God will hear the right implies that no appeal is made to partiality or privilege, but merely to the merits of the case. The righteousness claimed is not merely that of the cause, but that of the person, not inherent but derived from the imputed righteousness of faith according to the doctrine of the Old as well as the New Testament. The quality alleged is not that of sinless perfection, but that of sincere conformity to the Divine will. A.

1-3. *Assertions of innocence in the Psalms*. We find in the Psalms many assertions of uprightness, of innocence, of freedom from transgression, which almost startle us. Such expressions have sometimes given offence, as if they savored of a self-righteous spirit. But a little reflection will show how mistaken such a notion is. We have but to turn to the passages in

which they occur, to see at once that the words are not the words of a proud boaster, ignorant alike of his own heart and of the law of God. Take, for instance, such passages as this: "Thou hast proved my heart; Thou hast visited (me) by night; Thou hast tried (me) and findest no evil thought in me; neither does my heart transgress" (v. 3). The words are bold words, no doubt. Such an assertion of innocence is one which we might tremble to make. But it is not self-righteous. It is made solemnly in the presence of God, with a direct appeal to Him as knowing the heart: "From Thy presence let my judgment go forth; Thine eyes behold uprightness" (v. 2). It is fully explained by other language immediately preceding: "Give ear to my prayer which (is uttered) *by no deceitful lips*" (v. 1). These last words show us the sense in which such a passage is to be taken. The Psalmist is not asserting his freedom from sin, but the uprightness and guilelessness of his heart toward God. He is no hypocrite, no dissembler; he is *not consciously* doing wrong. P.

He knows himself to be righteous not only in his relation to men, but also in his relation to God. In all such assertions of the pious self-consciousness, what is meant is a righteousness of life that has its ground in a righteousness by faith. The self-righteousness is only in appearance; for the righteousness to which the Psalmists appeal is not the merit of works, not a sum of good deeds, that are recounted to God with a claim for reward, but a bending of the will and a shaping of the life that is in accordance with the mind of God, that has its roots in the emptying of self and in the surrendering of one's self to Him, and that looks upon itself as the result of His justifying, sanctifying, preserving and guiding grace. The Old Testament looks at this matter more after the manner of James than after that of Paul; but even the Old Testament righteousness of life is rooted in the grace of God the Redeemer toward sinful man, who in himself is devoid of righteousness before God. There is, therefore, no self-righteousness in David's praying that the righteousness, which in his person is persecuted and cries for help, may be heard. D.

3. This verse expresses the consciousness not of sinlessness, but of sincerity; the Psalmist needs, and invites, the fiery process of testing and refining, but with a certainty that it will result in a recognition of his integrity. *Cook*.—It is not absolute innocence which the Psalmist here asserts; he is appealing to God

as knowing his uprightness of heart and honesty of purpose. The latter part of this verse might be rendered, with Delitzsch:

"Thou hast tried me, and findest nothing:

Have I cherished an evil thought?—it shall not pass my mouth."

Hast proved, hast tried. Both words used of the testing of metals, and especially the latter, which means properly to melt in the fire, so as to separate the dross from the ore. **By night**, as the season of quiet thought and self-examination. P.

It is night that lets us measure ourselves. We cannot know self by day. We are mixed with the busy, distracting world, dispersed and confused in action and enjoyment. The night comes to let the thoughts concentrate and fall back on their real strength, to make them feel what basis they have within: "Thou hast proved my heart, Thou hast visited me in the night." It is night that lets us measure the real universe. By day it is shut. We see only this earth and earthly sun. By night God withdraws the veil, reveals eternity with its far-off shores of sparkling worlds, and fills the soul with infinite longings, which make it conscious it has a universe within greater than the universe without, and which can be satisfied only with God. *Ker*.—Viewed in its relations to the life of man, the night is pre-eminently an interruption. It breaks in upon and suspends human occupations, of whatever kind; it writes on the face of the heavens the veto of God on uninterrupted work. This enforced suspension of activity suggests not merely the limited stock of strength at our disposal, but it also reminds us that we have a higher life than that which is represented and made the most of by the activity of this life, which will last when all that belongs to this life shall have passed away, a life for the nutriment and development of which God thus makes provision, and invites us to make provision, lest we should be swept without thought, without purpose, down the stream of time into the vast eternity that awaits us. H. P. L.

4. **By the word of Thy lips.** The Word is called, "The sword of the Spirit." In spiritual conflicts there is none like to that. The more ready the Scripture is with us, the greater advantage in our conflicts and temptations. When the devil came to assault Christ, He had Scripture ready for him, whereby He overcame the tempter. It is a great advantage when we have the word not only by us but in us, engrafted in the heart; when it is present

with us we are more able to resist the assaults of Satan. Either a man forgets the Word, or hath lost his affection to it, before he can be drawn to sin. *Manton*.—What the Scripture forbids, avoid; what it affirms, believe; what it commands, do; what it reproves, amend. As many as walk by this rule, peace on them, and on the Israel of God. *T. Adams*.

I have kept me from the ways. They whom Christ saves are they who at once attempt to save themselves, yet despair of saving themselves; who aim to do all, and confess they do naught; who are all love and all fear; who ever seek to please Him, yet feel they never can. All this seems a contradiction to the natural man; but those whom Christ enlightens understand that it is possible to work out their own salvation, yet to have it wrought out for them. *Newman*.

To keep the even tenor of one's way in sunshine and storm, through evil as well as through good report, amid afflictions and reproaches as well as smiles and benedictions, is a proof of integrity which he is thrice blessed who can appropriate to himself. To be always the same, at all times, in all places, in all conditions, in all companies; to stand firmly by our principles at every sacrifice of interest or of fame; to consent to be misunderstood and maligned rather than let go our integrity; to count nothing a good but duty, nothing ill but wrong—this is a perfection of character which, while it is incumbent upon all to pursue, such is the melancholy weakness of human nature that it has never been realized but once. Our efforts are at best but faint approximations. We press forward; we have not already attained, but the prize is in view. We have but one rule to go by. The law of the Lord must be in our hearts, must be the controlling law of our wills, if we would keep us from the *ways of the violent*. *Thornwell*.

6-12. The prayer to be kept in the evil world. The earnest, affectionate cleaving to God, the prayer to be hidden in the shadow of His wings, is proof enough that the former part of the Psalm is no merely self-righteous boast. *P.*

6, 7. It is only now, when he has laid bare his very heart and his walk before Jehovah, that he resumes the petition which he has thus justified and grounded, and unfolds it in detail. Being such an one as he has described himself to be according to the testimony of his conscience, he may call upon God, for God hears such and will therefore also hear him. *D.*

7. This verse is remarkable for its compact

brevity. What the Hebrew gives in six words the common version takes twenty-six to convey. *Chambers*.—"Show Thy marvellous loving-kindness" is, more precisely, show Thy loving-kindness *to be marvellous*—make the manifestations of it to be glorious in the case of Thy servant. Beautiful indeed is the form of this address to the Hearer of prayer—"O Thou that savest by Thy right hand all who trust in Thee from their uprising foes." *C.*—**Thy marvellous lovingkindness.** Marvellous in its distinguishing character, its faithfulness, its immutability, and above all, marvellous in the wonders which it works. That marvellous grace which has redeemed us with the precious blood of God's only begotten is here invoked to come to the rescue. *S.*

8. Both the images in this verse, alike expressive of the affection of the Psalmist and of his deep sense of God's tender care and love to him, are borrowed from the beautiful passage in Deut. 32:10, 11. For the former, see also Zech. 2:8. The latter occurs frequently. In the New Testament our Lord uses the still more tender image of the hen gathering her brood under her wings. *P.*

The pupil or apple of the eye is a proverbial type of that which is most precious and most easily injured, and which therefore has a double claim to sedulous protection. *A.*—Both God's care in the construction of the eye, and the instinct of man under a consciousness of its priceless value, conspire to the keeping of the eye above all other keeping, thus making it an admirable illustration of the care with which we fitly pray God to keep us from all sin and harm. *C.*

Shadow of thy wings. In his great hymn (Deut. 32) Moses already speaks of God's wings; but the double figure of the shadow of God's wings (here and 36:8; 57:2; 63:8) was coined by David. "God's wings" are the spreadings out, *i.e.*, the manifestations, of His love, which takes the creature under the protection of its intimate fellowship, and the "shadow" of these wings is the refreshing rest and security which the fellowship of this love affords to those who hide themselves in it from the heat of outward and inward conflict. *D.*

10. "Their fat have they shut up." This may refer both to the outward condition and the state of heart. These men led a luxurious and selfish life (as is further said, v. 14), in consequence of which they had become proud and unfeeling. Others render, "they have closed their heart," *i.e.*, they have no feeling of compassion. *P.*

12, 13. The foe springs upon David like a lion; may Jehovah—so he implores—in his defence stand in the way of this lion and cast him down. D.

14. The simplest construction is that given in the Prayer-Book version, which takes the preposition in the same sense before both nouns—“*from the men, and from the evil world.*”

World is then simply a collective equivalent to the plural *men*. The men of the world are represented as having their largest wishes gratified not only in the number, but the prosperous condition of their children. See Psalms 127: 3; 128: 3, 4; Job 21: 111. The whole is only a description of things as they seem to man, before God's judgments interpose to change them. A.

14. Men of the world. The word here used for “world” (*cheled*) denotes the transitory nature of the world as a thing of *time*. Men of the world are those who have made it their home, and who, together with the world and the lust thereof, are passing away. Being thus worldly-minded, they have *their portion* in life, *i.e.*, in the brief years of their existence upon earth. Then this love of the world is opposed to the love of the Father, not the present to the future so much as the temporal to the eternal, the world to God. The contrast to “their portion in this life” is to be found in v. 15. On the one side, the outward, the transitory, the unreal; on the other, the inward, the abiding, the true. We have here a view of the *world* and of *life* very remarkable for the Old Testament—a kind of anticipation of the contrast between the flesh and the spirit which Paul gives us, or the love of the world and of God of which John speaks. P.—The contrast is not so much between this life and the life to come, as between the world (life) and God. Here we see right into the very heart of Old Testament faith. For Old Testament faith all the blessedness and glory of the future life, which the New Testament discloses, is bound up in Jehovah. Jehovah is its highest good, in the possession of whom it is raised above heaven and earth, life and death; to yield itself to Him blindly, without any explicit knowledge of a future blessed life, to find its satisfaction in Him, to rest in Him, to hide itself in Him when face to face with death, is the characteristic feature of Old Testament faith. D.

Whose portion is in this life. Time and this lower world bound all their hopes and fears. They have no serious believing apprehensions of anything beyond this present life; therefore have nothing to withhold them from

the most injurious violence, if thou withhold them not; men that believe not another world are the ready actors of any imaginable mischiefs and tragedies in this. *Howe.*—*Self-denial is the grand law* of all holy living. It is living with reference to the future. Self-indulgence lives for the present, and the immediate present, and utterly disregards a future that is often by no means very remote. Accordingly the Bible represents it as a damning sin to be content, as are “men of the world,” to “have their portion in this life.” Dives is charged with neither immorality nor inhumanity, but simply with having by his own choice, in his “lifetime, received his good things!” *Pierson.*

15. Worldly men have their *satisfaction* in this life, in treasures, in children; David hopes to be *satisfied* with the likeness of God. P.—The Hebrew makes the antithesis between the writer and his rich and powerful enemies very strong: I, *for my part*, have a far different lot from theirs. My treasures are not of the earth, consist not in being satisfied with children and with wealth enough to enjoy with them while I live and to leave for them at my death; but it shall suffice for me to behold Thy face in purity and integrity so as to ensure Thy favor; it shall be enough for me to have the blissful satisfaction of awaking from the sleep of death in Thine own blessed image! I prefer the construction which refers this passage to the future life. In support of it I urge, (1) that the words themselves not only admit but with considerable force demand this construction. “Beholding the face of God” will not have its legitimate meaning filled out until we reach heaven. “Awaking” is painfully meagre and inept if applied to rising from one's nightly sleep, but is not only pertinent but sublimely glorious when said of the resurrection from the grave. “With Thy likeness” a Hebrew word which legitimately means *form*, *image*, as of what is shaped, fashioned, has no proper sense if applied to each morning's rising from sleep, but is pregnant with grand significance as spoken of the resurrection body clothed upon with immortality. I also urge, (2) that the context—the relation of thought in this antithesis between David and his wicked persecutors—demands the reference of his words to the future life. They are “men of this world,” he of another; “they have their portion in this life,” he in the next; they are satisfied with children, he with his final awaking in the Divine image; they make out a sort of immortality by leaving their wealth to their sons and to their sons' sons after them; but David's im-

mortality is simply that of the just—the glorious inheritance laid up for God’s children. These two comprehensive considerations constitute in my view the legitimate arguments by which the main question must be determined. C.

The language is quite free from obscurity. I, says David, as before (v. 6) emphatically—I, such as I am, poor, persecuted, but innocent, and God’s friend, shall behold Thy countenance in righteousness. So far there is no substantial difference between commentators. David set against the prosperity of his enemies the single fact that he is sure of a vindication of his righteousness in God’s own presence. But the next clause goes much farther. “When I awake”—what can that mean? Not from sleep, David had no thought of sleeping; not from the present danger, that had no connection with repose; what could it be but from death? His enemies are satisfied in this life with the hid treasures of Providence; when David awakes out of the sleep, which will be the end of all happiness to them, he will be satisfied with God’s likeness. The word likeness does not mean the “likeness and image” of Gen. 1, but the Form of God Himself, called in the New Testament *morphee* and *idos*, of which all we know is that it is inconceivable, but of which we believe that it will be beheld and realized in the Person of the Son. David believed, if we may trust these words, that when life was gone, and the sleep of death terminated, all his longings would be satisfied by the manifestation of that Form. Cook.

I cannot doubt that the reference is to “the waking from the sleep of death,” and therefore to a resurrection. In opposition to this interpretation, it is commonly asserted that the truth of a resurrection had not yet been revealed, and that, consequently, if we find the doctrine here, the Psalm must be of later date—after the Exile. But this is mere assertion. First, as regards the use of the figure. “Waking” from death occurs in 2 Kings 4 : 31. Death is spoken of as a sleep from which there is no awaking [Job 14 : 12 ; Jer. 51 : 39]. Next, “Awake—ye that sleep in the dust” (Isa. 26 : 19), plainly refers to the resurrection. (Hence critics who think this truth *could not* be known before the Exile are obliged to suppose that this chapter was written *after* that time.) Again, why should not David have attained, in some degree, to the knowledge of a truth which in later times was so clearly revealed as it was to Ezekiel (who makes use of it as the image of the resurrection of Israel, 37 : 1-14) and to Daniel (12 :

2)? Is it astonishing that a truth should first appear somewhat dimly expressed, and afterward shine with a greater brightness? In all times there are men whom God takes into a nearer communion with Himself, and who attain to an insight and an utterance beyond that of the dull, unripe world. P.

Religion has its commencement in the knowledge of what are termed the natural attributes of God, which in fact are subservient only to higher perfections; it receives its next considerable enhancement from a knowledge or spiritual perception of His attributes of Holiness and Goodness; it reaches its consummation in an immediate perception or open vision of His unchanging and unsullied Blessedness. This absolute felicity of God is the ultimate point of theology; and the eras of eternity shall be occupied in learning all that it comprises. Of these three stages of knowledge, the first is acquired chiefly by the deductions and inferences of reason. The second, by the testimony of Scripture, along with that inward communication, or “teaching of the Spirit,” by which the heart is quickened. The third must wait for the immediate or *real* and *direct knowledge* of its object in the future world. I. T.

Everlasting life and salvation in heaven is not a truth revealed only by the Gospel, but was well known and firmly believed by the saints of old. They had assurance of this, that they should live with God forever in glory. “*When I awake with Thy likeness.*” “Thou wilt receive me to glory” (Psalm 73 : 24). “*In Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore*” (Psalm 16 : 11). They looked for another country, whereof Canaan was but a type and shadow, as the apostle shows in the Epistle to the Hebrews (11 : 16). They did believe this in those days. Samuel Mather.

“*When I awake.*” How apt and obvious is the analogy between our awaking out of natural sleep, and the holy soul’s rising up out of the darkness and torpor of its present state into the enlivening light of God’s presence! It is truly said so to *awake* at its first quitting these darksome regions, when it lays aside its cumbersome night-veil. It doth so more perfectly in the joyful morning of the resurrection-day, when mortality is swallowed up in life, and all the yet hovering shadows of it are vanished and fled away. Nor doth this interpretation less fitly accord to the other contents of this verse; for to what state do the sight of God’s face, and satisfaction with His likeness, so fully agree, as to that of future blessedness in the other

world? The contexture of discourse in this and the foregoing verse together seems plainly to determine us to this sense; for what can be more conspicuous in them than a purposed comparison, an opposition of two states of felicity mutually to each other? That of the wicked, whom he calls *men of time*, and whose portion, he tells us, is in this life; and the righteous man's, his own, which he expected not to be till he should awake—that is, not till after this life. *Howe.*

The soul is but finite, but God is infinite. Though God be a good that satisfies, yet He does not surfeit. Fresh joys spring continually from His face; and He is as much to be desired after millions of years by glorified souls as at the first moment. There is a fulness in God that satisfies, and yet so much sweetness that the soul still desires. If there be so much delight in God, when we see Him only by faith (1 Pet. 1:8), what will the joy of vision be when we shall see Him face to face! *T. Watson.*—The nature of the satisfaction. “Thy likeness.” Like the body of Jesus we are to believe our new resurrection body will be. Only it will have passed through a great change: no longer carnal, but spiritual; not dull, but glorious; not a hinderer, but a helper, of the soul; framed and moulded in exquisite adaptation, first to hold a perfected spirit, and then to be as wings to execute all the pure and unlimited desires of the soul for the glory of God. And so with the spiritual nature of man. “We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” *J. V.*

When we live again it will not be by any external transfer to us of the benefit of our Saviour's resurrection, any more than our being forgiven our sins will be by any external transfer of the benefits of our Saviour's suffering. Both are inward participations, living gifts, gained by faith, growing up under a living law—the law of the Spirit of life. “If we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection.” Straight out of the redemption, like the flower from the broken seed, springs our future as our only present peace and purity. Heaven is a place of white garments, and nothing makes them white but the precious blood. Jesus died to set us free from the bondage of a hard, compulsory, unsatisfying, unloving sort of obedience, to lead us out into the liberty of a free and loving service where faith and thankfulness are the ever fresh incentives. And so the Christian's resurrection life will be the perfection of that liberty, the unclouded sunshine

of the presence of the Lord. It will be “likeness”—likeness in the resurrection because likeness in the death; likeness wrought by believing, and loving, and serving; and when the trustful and affectionate servant, having passed from death unto life, awakes up in it, he will be “satisfied.” *F. D. H.*

The truth which David felt when he said, “I shall be satisfied when I awake,” is that the spirit, because emancipated from the body, shall spring into greater intensity of action, shall put forth powers that have been held down here, and shall come into contact with an order of things which here it has but indirectly known. To our true selves and to God we shall wake. Here we are like men asleep in some chamber that looks toward the eastern sky. Morning by morning comes the sunrise, with the tender glory of its rosy light and blushing heavens, and the heavy eyes are closed to it all. Here and there some lighter sleeper, with thinner eyelids or face turned to the sun, is half conscious of a vague brightness, and feels the light, though he sees not the colors of the sky nor the forms of the filmy clouds. Such souls are our saints and prophets, but most of us sleep on unconscious. To us all the moment comes when we shall wake, and see for ourselves the bright and terrible world which we have so often forgotten, and so often been tempted to think was itself a dream. *A. M.*

The spirits of just men are made perfect in heaven. The soul is the glory of man, and grace is the glory of the soul, and both are then in their exaltation. All the faculties of the soul are raised to the highest degrees of natural and Divine perfection. In this life grace renews the faculties, but does not elevate them to their highest pitch. It does not make a mean understanding pregnant, nor a frail memory strong, nor a slow tongue eloquent, but sanctifies them as they are. But when the soul is released from this dark body of earth, the understanding is clear and quick, the memory firm, the will and affections ardent and vigorous. And they are enriched with Divine light and love and power, that makes them fit for the most noble and heavenly operations. The lineaments of God's image on the soul are first drawn here, but then it receives His last hand. All the celestial colors are added, to give the utmost life and lustre to it. Here we are advancing, but by death we arrive at perfection. *Bates.*

To say of a man that he is just, justified in Christ, is the beginning of glory. But to say *the just made perfect* is to reach a point where angels

and principalities and powers will never be wearied with gazing ; where all that they have beheld in the past eternity of God's wonders of wisdom, power, and love, will leave them still astonished and enraptured, with a new surpassing rapture, at this before inconceivable revelation of the glory of God in the Saviour seen through His saints. This is that glorification together with Christ to which the Apostle Paul refers, when he speaks of the glory which shall be revealed in us ; the glory of those who are glorified together with Christ, being that of those who are *without fault before the throne of God*. Well may the earnest expectation of the creature wait for and long after such a manifestation of the Sons of God. G. B. C.

What is heaven ? Likeness to God ! Love, purity, fellowship with Him ; the condition of the spirit and the relation of the soul to Him. The noblest truth about the future world flows from the words of our Master—"This is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." Not, "this brings ;" not, "this will lead up to ;" not, "this will draw after it ;" but "this is ;" and whosoever possesses that eternal life hath already in him the germ of all the glories that are round the throne, and the blessedness that fills the hearts of perfected spirits. If so, if already eternal life in the bud standeth in the knowledge of God in Christ, what makes its fruitage and completeness ? Surely, not physical changes or the circumstances of heaven, at least not these primarily, however much such changes and circumstances may subserve our blessedness there, and the anticipation of them may help our sense-bound hopes here. But the completion of heaven is the completion of our knowledge of God and Christ, with all the perfecting of spirit which that implies and produces. The faith, and love, and happy obedience, and consecration which is calm, that partially occupied and ruled the soul here are to be thought of as enlarged, perfected, delivered from the interruption of opposing thoughts, of sensuous desires, of selfish purposes, of earthly and sinful occupations. And that perfect knowledge and perfect union and perfect likeness are perfect bliss. And that bliss is heaven. And if, while heaven is a place, the heaven of heaven be a state, then no more words are needed to show that, then, heaven can be no dead level, nor can all stand at the same stage of attainments, though all be perfect ; but that in that solemn company of the blessed, "the spirits of just men made perfect," there are indefinitely numerous degrees of approximation

to the unattainable perfection, which stretches above them all, and draws them all to itself. A. M.

The source of heaven's blessedness and power is the likeness of the soul to Christ. He is the image of the unseen Father, who has taken the copy from the Divine side and transferred it to the human for our example. He has removed by His life and death all the guilt which barred our way to God, and He has secured all the Spirit's power to make that image ours. Slowly we are drawn to His image here by the cords of love, as they strengthen their hold on us ; but the image at best remains incomplete and dim. When He shall appear "we shall see His face, and His name shall be on our foreheads." It shall be deeper—in *our souls* ; and all of God's truth and grace that can be communicated to a creature shall enter into the depth of the spiritual nature through Christ. If the active soul finds scope for work in God's material universe, the Mary-like spirit which delights to sit at the feet of Christ and hear His word shall have unrebuked leisure in the heavenly home. We may trust that in some way the sisters, *Service* and *Meditation*, will interchange gifts, and be perfectly at one when they reach His higher presence. *Ker*.

Now we see God as by a dim reflection, but then face to face ; now we know Him in part, but then even as we are known ; then this imperfect vision of faith will be changed into a Divine and beatific manifestation of God. All that majesty which now overawes us will then be revealed to our prepared spirits ; the Divine beauty will then fill all the powers and irradiate all the recesses of the mind. And to those who have here delighted to trace God in His works, His providence, and more especially in His word and grace, how delightful will be this intimate knowledge of the Father of spirits ! *R. Hall*.—Here we meet with checks and hindrances to development manward and Godward—in absorption in the world's business—in the multiplicity of its cares—in the weariness of the body, rendering torpid the susceptibilities of the soul—in the isolations, the coldness, the discords of life—in the rareness of noble examples showing what hearts may be—in the dimness, the contradictions, the divisions, the sectarianisms of earth—in the faint apprehensions of God, of Christ, of eternity ; in all these we find sad clogs to the growth of the heart's higher life. But in heaven all these will be gone. *There* will be found all that can give elevation, expansion, depth, power to the affections, clearness of insight into spiritual realities, the over-

shadowing presence and inflowing glories of God, the purest society of congenial spirits, all whose ways and all whose attractions will be on high, noble examples of the affections in lovely embodiment, sweet amenities, open souls all about us with prompt hospitalities and fellowship—everything to inspire us to flow out in confidence and love—no repressions or repulsions, all inviting to perpetual outgushings of heart—God the Father over us and all good souls about us. These will be the incitements, the nourishment of our affections; and in this Divine atmosphere they will have a growth, exhibit a luxuriance, effloresce in a beauty now inconceivable to us. The heart that has ever been really quickened to a Divine life, that has ever been put beside the beating heart of God and felt its Divine pulsations however faintly, such a heart shall live forever. *J. Drummond.*

The *place* of our future life is obscure. How there can be relation to place without a body we do not know, and even when the body is restored, we cannot tell the locality of the resurrection-world. Nothing in reason and nothing certain in revelation connects it with any one spot in God's universe. The *outward manner* of our final existence is also uncertain. That it will be blessed and glorious, freed from all that can hurt or annoy, we may well believe. That it will be proportioned to the future material frame, we may reasonably infer. We may calculate that, in the degree in which the incorruptible and immortal body shall excel the body of sin and death, our final home, with its scenes of beauty and grandeur, its landscapes and skies, shall surpass our dwelling-place on this earth. There is a *measure* in the works of God on which we can reckon, both in the patterns of things in the heavens, and in the heavenly things themselves. Many of the *modes of thought and feeling*, in that life to come, perplex us. The great laws of mind and spirit must remain the same, because in them we are formed after the image of God. In these we are His offspring, and draw not simply from His *will*, but from His *nature*. Truth must forever continue truth, and goodness eternally commend itself to the soul, else our training for the future life would be valueless, and our confidence in the reality of things shaken. We can never admit that the perceptions of the spiritual world will be reversed or essentially altered. But there may be large modifications, through the extension and elevation of our thoughts. There are three things promised us which are all connected with each other: *Christ's manifestation*

—“He shall appear.” *A full vision on our part*—“We shall see Him as He is.” And *complete assimilation as the result*—“We shall be like Him.” *Ker.*

That future life gives us two elements, an infinite God and an indefinitely expansible human spirit: an infinite God to fill, and a soul to be filled, the measure and the capacity of which has no limit set to it that we can see. What will be the consequence of the contact of these two? Why this, for the first thing, that always, at every moment of that blessed life, there shall be a perpetual fruition, a perpetual satisfaction, a deep and full fountain filling the whole soul with the refreshment of its waves and the music of its flow. And yet, and yet—though at every moment in heaven we shall be satisfied, filled full of God, full to overflowing in all our powers—yet the very fact that the God who dwells in us, and fills our whole natures with unsullied and perfect blessedness, is an infinite God; and that we in whom the infinite Father dwells are men with souls that can grow, and can grow forever, will result in this, that at every moment our capacities will expand; that at every moment, therefore, the desire will grow and spring afresh; that at every moment God will be seen unveiling undreamed-of beauties, and revealing hitherto unknown heights of blessedness before us; and that the sight of that transcendent, unapproached, unapproachable, and yet attracting and transforming glory, will draw us onward as by an impulse from above, and the possession of some portion of it will bear us upward as by a power from within; and so, nearer, nearer, ever nearer to the throne of light, the centre of blessedness, the growing, and glorifying, and greatening souls of the perfectly and increasingly blessed shall mount up with wings as eagles. Heaven is endless longing, accompanied with an endless fruition—a longing which is blessedness, a longing which is life!

Seeing God we shall be satisfied. With all lesser joys the eye is not satisfied with seeing, but to look on Him will be enough. Enough for mind and heart, wearied and perplexed with partial knowledge and imperfect love; enough for eager desires, which thirst, after all draughts from other streams; enough for will, chafing against lower lords and yet longing for authoritative control; enough for all my being—to see God. Here we can rest after all wanderings, and say, “I travel no further; here will I dwell forever—I shall be satisfied.” And as we reckon up the rich treasure of our immortal hopes, our faith grows bold, and pauses not

even at the lofty certainty of God without us, known directly and adequately, but climbs to the higher assurance of God within us, flooding our darkness with His great light, and changing us into the perfect copies of His express Image, His only-begotten Son. A. M.

PSALM XVIII.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN. A PSALM OF DAVID THE SERVANT OF THE LORD, WHO SPAKE UNTO THE LORD THE WORDS OF THIS SONG IN THE DAY THAT THE LORD DELIVERED HIM FROM THE HAND OF ALL HIS ENEMIES, AND FROM THE HAND OF SAUL : AND HE SAID,

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| <p>1 I LOVE thee, O LORD, my strength.
 2 The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer ;
 My God, my strong rock, in him will I trust ;
 My shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower.
 3 I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised :
 So shall I be saved from mine enemies.
 4 The cords of death compassed me,
 And the floods of ungodliness made me afraid.
 5 The cords of Sheol were round about me :
 The snares of death came upon me.
 6 In my distress I called upon the LORD,
 And cried unto my God :
 He heard my voice out of his temple,
 And my cry before him came into his ears.
 7 Then the earth shook and trembled,
 The foundations also of the mountains moved
 And were shaken, because he was wroth.
 8 There went up a smoke out of his nostrils,
 And fire out of his mouth devoured :
 Coals were kindled by it.
 9 He bowed the heavens also, and came down ;
 And thick darkness was under his feet.
 10 And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly :
 Yea, he flew swiftly upon the wings of the wind.
 11 He made darkness his hiding place, his pavilion round about him ;
 Darkness of waters, thick clouds of the skies.
 12 At the brightness before him his thick clouds passed,
 Hailstones and coals of fire.
 13 The LORD also thundered in the heavens,
 And the Most High uttered his voice ;
 Hailstones and coals of fire.</p> | <p>14 And he sent out his arrows, and scattered them ;
 Yea, lightnings manifold, and discomfited them.
 15 Then the channels of waters appeared,
 And the foundations of the world were laid bare,
 At thy rebuke, O LORD,
 At the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.
 16 He sent from on high, he took me ;
 He drew me out of many waters.
 17 He delivered me from my strong enemy,
 And from them that hated me, for they were too mighty for me.
 18 They came upon me in the day of my calamity :
 But the LORD was my stay.
 19 He brought me forth also into a large place ;
 He delivered me, because he delighted in me.
 20 The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness ;
 According to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.
 21 For I have kept the ways of the LORD,
 And have not wickedly departed from my God.
 22 For all his judgments were before me,
 And I put not away his statutes from me.
 23 I was also perfect with him,
 And I kept myself from mine iniquity.
 24 Therefore hath the LORD recompensed me according to my righteousness,
 According to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight.
 25 With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful ;
 With the perfect man thou wilt shew thyself perfect ;
 26 With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure ;
 And with the perverse thou wilt shew thyself froward.</p> |
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27 For thou wilt save the afflicted people ;
 But the haughty eyes thou wilt bring down.
 28 For thou wilt light my lamp :
 The LORD my God will lighten my darkness.
 29 For by thee I run upon a troop ;
 And by my God do I leap over a wall.
 30 As for God, his way is perfect :
 The word of the LORD is tried ;
 He is a shield unto all them that trust in him.
 31 For who is God, save the LORD ?
 And who is a rock, beside our God ?
 32 The God that girdeth me with strength,
 And maketh my way perfect.
 33 He maketh my feet like hinds' feet :
 And setteth me upon my high places.
 34 He teacheth my hands to war ;
 So that mine arms do bend a bow of brass.
 35 Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation :
 And thy right hand hath holden me up,
 And thy gentleness [*condescension*] hath made me great.
 36 Thou hast enlarged my steps under me,
 And my feet have not slipped.
 37 I will pursue mine enemies, and overtake them :
 Neither will I turn again till they are consumed.
 38 I will smite them through that they shall not be able to rise :
 They shall fall under my feet.
 39 For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle :
 Thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me.

40 Thou hast also made mine enemies turn their backs unto me,
 That I might cut off them that hate me.
 41 They cried, but there was none to save :
 Even unto the LORD, but he answered them not.
 42 Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind :
 I did cast them out as the mire of the streets.
 43 Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people ;
 Thou hast made me the head of the nations :
 A people whom I have not known shall serve me.
 44 As soon as they hear of me they shall obey me :
 The strangers shall submit themselves unto me.
 45 The strangers shall fade away,
 And shall come trembling out of their close places
 46 The LORD liveth ; and blessed be my rock ;
 And exalted be the God of my salvation :
 47 Even the God that executeth vengeance for me,
 And subdueth peoples under me.
 48 He rescueth me from mine enemies :
 Yea, thou liftest me up above them that rise up against me :
 Thou deliverest me from the violent man.
 49 Therefore I will give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the nations,
 And will sing praises unto thy name.
 50 Great deliverance giveth he to his king ;
 And sheweth lovingkindness to his anointed,
 To David and to his seed, for evermore.

IN this magnificent hymn the royal poet sketches in a few grand outlines the tale of his life—the record of his marvellous deliverances and of the victories which Jehovah had given him—the record, too, of his own heart, the truth of its affection toward God, and the integrity of purpose by which it had ever been influenced. Throughout that singularly checkered life—hunted as he had been by Saul before he came to the throne, and harassed perpetually after he became king by rivals who disputed his authority and endeavored to steal away the hearts of his people, compelled to fly for his life before his own son, and engaged afterward in long and fierce wars with foreign nations—one thing had never forsaken him—the love and the presence of Jehovah. By His help he had subdued every enemy, and now, in his old age, looking back with devout thankfulness on the

past, he sings this great song of praise to the God of his life. With a heart full of love, he will tell *how* Jehovah delivered him, and then there rises before the eye of his mind the whole force and magnitude of the peril from which he had escaped. So much the more wonderful appears the deliverance, which, accordingly, he represents in a bold poetical figure, as a stooping of the Most High from heaven to save him ; who comes, as He came of old to Sinai, with all the terror and gloom of earthquake and tempest and thick darkness. But God delivers those only who trust in Him, and who are like Him. There must be an inner life of communion with God, if man will know His mercy. Hence David passes on to that covenant relationship in which he had stood to God. He had ever been a true Israelite ; and therefore God, the true God of Israel, had dealt with him

accordingly. And thus it is at the last that the servant of Jehovah finds His reward. Jehovah, to whom he had ever looked, did not forsake him, but girded him with strength to the battle, and made even distant nations the vassals of his sway. The hymn concludes, as it had opened, with a joyful thanksgiving to Jehovah, who had done so great things for him. The inscription, which informs us that this hymn was composed toward the close of David's life, is confirmed by the fact that we have the same account given of its composition in 2 Sam. 22, where this hymn is also found, though with a number of variations. (See Vol. iii., p. 400.)

The Psalm consists of three divisions, together with an introduction and conclusion: Introduction, setting forth all that Jehovah is to the Psalmist (vs. 1-3). The record of David's sufferings and peril, and the mighty deliverance by which he was rescued (vs. 4-19). The reason for this deliverance as based upon the character of God and the principles of His moral government (vs. 20-30). The blessings which he had received in his life; his own preservation and that of his race (v. 28); help and strength in battle, rule over all enemies (vs. 31-45). Conclusion, consisting of a joyful thanksgiving and acknowledgment of all God's mercies (vs. 46-50). P.

The author of the Books of Samuel found the song already existing as Davidic; the difference between his text and that of the Psalter shows that even when he wrote, the song had been handed down by tradition for a considerable length of time; here and there writers of the period of the later kings speak in echoes of it; it bears throughout the mark of the classical period of the language and poetry. Everything points us to David and constrains us to admit his authorship; and it is to him also that all the other songs that are introduced as Davidic in the second Book of Samuel (those referring to Saul and Jonathan, to Abner, etc.) really belong. This, the greatest of them all, has sprung entirely from the new self-consciousness, to which he was raised by the promises in 2 Sam 7; toward the end it even expressly refers to these promises; for David's assurance of the eternal duration of his house and of God's gracious covenant with it rests upon the announcement made by Nathan. D.

How thickly sown the Psalm is with metaphors, which, in David's mouth, have a peculiar force and beauty. Such are the names by which he addresses God. Thrice he speaks of God as a rock: "Jehovah is my rock, my fortress, my buckler, the horn of my salvation,

my high tower." And again, "Who is a rock, save our God?" And yet again, "Jehovah liveth, and blessed be my rock." How suitable are such epithets as coming from one who when hunted by Saul had so often taken refuge among the rocks and fastnesses, the almost inaccessible crags and cliffs of Palestine! As he had escaped by swiftness of foot, so he tells how God had made his feet like the feet of the hinds or gazelles, which he had so often seen bounding from crag to crag before his eyes, and had set him "upon high places" beyond reach of the hunter's arrow. To the same class of metaphors belong also others in the same Psalm: "Thy right hand hath holden me up," "Thou hast made room for my steps under me, that my ankles have not slipped;" while the martial character of the whole is thoroughly in keeping with the entire tenor of David's life, who first, as captain of a band of outlaws, lived by his sword, and who afterward, when he became king, was engaged in perpetual struggles either with foreign or domestic enemies. P.

It is one long outpouring of rapturous thankfulness and triumphant adoration, which streams from a full heart in buoyant waves of song. Nowhere else, even in the Psalms—and if not there, certainly nowhere else—is there such a continuous tide of unmingled praise, such magnificence of imagery, such passion of love to the delivering God, such joyous energy of conquering trust. It throbs throughout with the life blood of devotion. The strong flame, white with its very ardor, quivers with its own intensity as it steadily rises heavenward. All the terrors and pains and dangers of the weary years—the black fuel for the ruddy glow—melt into warmth too great for smoke, too equable to blaze. The plaintive notes that had so often wailed from his harp, sad as if the night wind had been wandering among its chords, have all led up to this rushing burst of full-toned gladness. The very blessedness of heaven is anticipated, when sorrows gone by are understood and seen in their connection with the joy to which they have led, and are felt to be the theme for deepest thankfulness. Thank God that, for the consolation of the whole world, we have this hymn of praise from the same lips which said, "My life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing." "We have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy." The tremulous minors of trustful sorrow shall swell into rapturous praise; and he who, compassed with foes, cries upon God, will, here or yonder, sing this song "unto the Lord, in the day that the Lord de-

livers him from the hand of all his enemies." A. M.

It is a Psalm of deliverance or salvation ; the two words are the same. The whole history of the Bible from beginning to end pertains to what God calls deliverance. We find in *David's* history a history of deliverance. David was a man of like passions with ourselves, not faultless, not perfect, but falling again and again into sin, and yet plucked out of that iniquity into which he fell by the interposing hand of Him who had great deliverances always in store for him. *Israel's* history is a history of deliverance, and very remarkably so. Each section of *Israel's* history contains a gospel for us. Each one of *Israel's* deliverances proclaims glad tidings of great joy to us in our weakness, weariness, and exposure to continual danger from enemies on the right hand and on the left. The history of the *Church* is a history of deliverance—deliverances just at the time when she was lowest, deliverances which put a new song in her mouth, and sent her on a new career of gladness and usefulness. The history of each *believer* is a history of deliverance—deliverance from first to last, deliverance at the hand of the faithful Deliverer, He who came in the name of the Lord to save us, who is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. *H. Bonar.*

Title. Servant of Jehovah. After Moses and Joshua David is the first who receives this epithet in a special sense. For he, with whom the kingship of promise began, served the people of God in no less epoch-making a manner than Moses, by means of whom they obtained the land of promise. D.

1-3. Looking back upon his eventful life, David pours out his heart, first in the expression of strong and tender love (the verb in this meaning occurs only here) to his God ; and then in the attempt to set forth in some measure, by employing one figure after another, all that God had been to him during the days of his pilgrimage. P.

The first clause strikes the key-note. "I love Thee, O Jehovah, my strength." That personal attachment to God, which is so characteristic of David's religion, can no longer be pent up in silence, but gushes forth like some imprisoned stream, broad and full even from its well head. The common word for "love" is too weak for him, and he bends to his use another, never elsewhere employed to express man's emotions toward God, the intensity of which is but feebly expressed by some such periphrasis as, "From my heart do I love

Thee." The same exalted feeling is wonderfully set forth by the loving accumulation of Divine names which follow, as if he would heap together in one great pile all the rich experiences of that God, unnamed after all names, which he had garnered up in his distresses and deliverances. They tell so much as the poor vehicle of words can tell what his Shepherd in the heavens had been to him. A. M.

All these designations of God are fruits of the affliction out of which David's song has sprung—viz., his persecution by Saul, when, living in a country that was rich in caves but poor in respect of forests, he betook himself to rocks, and mountains served him as fortresses. In the refuge which the mountainous country afforded him in these days, and in the happy accidents which occasionally brought about his deliverance when he was in situations of the very greatest danger, David sees only special manifestations of that which Jehovah Himself was to him in the last result. The confession of the God who has authenticated Himself in so many ways is continued in v. 4, a statement of a general fact of experience. D.

2. *Jehovah (is) my rock and my fortress and my deliverer ; my God (is) my rock, I will trust in Him ; my shield and my horn of salvation, my height (or high place).* By this accumulation of descriptive epithets the Psalmist represents God as the object of his trust and his protector. The first two figures, *my rock* and *my fortress*, contain an allusion to the physical structure of the Holy Land, as well as to David's personal experience. The caves and fissures of the rocks, with which the land abounded, had often afforded him shelter and concealment when pursued by Saul. A.—Christ is my "shield," my "rock." A shield protects me by receiving the arrow aimed at my heart. A rock shelters me by enduring for me the fury of the billow or the blast. Therefore if Christ be my Saviour, He not only *hath* borne my sins, but He *does* every day bear my sorrows. And so let the load which comes upon my poor, weak, sinful soul be terrible as it may, if I only hear the footstep of my gracious Master, I know that He comes to lift off my burden, and thus my burden is really His burden, and therefore is light. *C. Wadsworth.*

In Him will I trust. Faith is that act and habit of the soul by which the idea of God is brought in from the far distance and enthroned over character and over life. It is an act of the whole mind, not of the intellect only which sees, but also of the conscience which responds ; of the heart which adores and loves

and trusts, and of the will which chooses. It is the act and habit of the soul by which the fact concerning God becomes a present and potent reality, filling the whole sphere of vision and of thought, and holding under its domination all plans, all purposes, all sentiments and estimates and desires and affections. *Bishop Andrews.*

Faith is sometimes spoken of in the New Testament as "*toward* Christ Jesus," which describes that great act of the soul by its direction, as if it were a going out or flight of the man's nature to the true goal of all active being. It is sometimes spoken of as "*on* Christ Jesus," which describes it as reposing on Him as the end of all seeking, and suggests such images as that of a hand that leans or of a burden borne, or a weakness upheld by contact with Him. But more sweet and great is the blessedness of faith considered as "*in* Him," as its abiding place and fortress-home, in union with and indwelling in whom the seeking spirit may fold its wings, and the weak heart may be strengthened to lift its burden cheerily, heavy though it be, and the soul may be full of tranquillity and soothed into a great calm. *Toward, on, and in*—so manifold are the phases of the relation between Christ and our faith. In all, faith is the same simple confidence, precisely like the *trust* which we put in one another. It covers the whole ground of man's relation to God. All religion, all devotion, everything which binds us to the unseen world is included in or evolved from trust in God. And this trust is the foundation of love to men and of everything else good and fair. A. M.

4-6. Then follows the record of his past experience, which gives the reason both for his *love* of Jehovah, and his prayer to Him. As he looks back on the past, he gathers into one all the perils to which he had been exposed, all the sufferings which he had endured, and so measures them not by the depth or intensity of any one, but by their aggregated volume and pressure. It was as if they had risen and swelled above him, wave upon wave; he had been as a swimmer, beaten and buffeted to and fro till his strength was spent, and it had like to have gone hard with him for his life. He was sinking, and, like Jonah, seemed beyond reach of succor; or, varying the figure, he had been taken in the toils which death, like a mighty hunter, had cast about him (v. 5). But even in this his uttermost strait he was not beyond the reach of God's arm. Neither the depths of the sea nor the gates of death can resist Jehovah's power. Therefore, when from the lowest

depths the prayer goes up to Jehovah in heaven, He reaches forth His hand from the highest heaven to the uttermost abyss, and plucks His servant from the jaws of death. P.—The more earnest we have been with God for deliverance, the more direct answer it is to our prayers. David's deliverances were so. David was found a praying man, and God was found a prayer-hearing God. If we pray as he did we shall speed as he did. H.

6. In my distress. If you listen even to David's harp, you shall hear as many hearse-like airs as carols; and the pencil of the Holy Spirit hath labored more in describing the afflictions of Job than the felicities of Solomon. Prosperity is not without many fears and distastes; and adversity is not without comforts and hopes. We see, in needleworks and embroideries, it is more pleasing to have a lively work upon a sad and solemn ground, than to have a dark and melancholy work upon a light-some ground; judge, therefore, of the pleasures of the heart by the pleasures of the eye. Certainly virtue is like precious odors—most fragrant when they are crushed; for prosperity doth best discover vice, but adversity doth best discover virtue. *Bacon.*—How true is that saying, that "Faith is safe when in danger, and in danger when secure; and prayer is fervent in straits, but in joyful and prosperous circumstances, if not quite cold and dead, at least lukewarm." Oh, happy straits, if they hinder the mind from flowing forth upon earthly objects, if they favor our correspondence with heaven and quicken our love to celestial objects, without which what we call life may more properly deserve the name of death! *Leighton.*

I called upon the Lord and cried. Prayer is not eloquence, but earnestness; not the definition of helplessness, but the feeling of it; it is the cry of faith to the ear of mercy. *Hannah More.*—Fervent prayer prevails much. Cold prayers, like cold suitors, never speed. Prayer without fervency is like a sacrifice without fire. Fervency is to prayer as fire to the incense; it makes it ascend to heaven as a sweet perfume. Prayer without fervency is speaking, not praying: lifeless prayer is no more prayer than the picture of a man is a man. Christ prayed with strong cries (Heb. 5: 7). *Watson.*

7-15. This passage, unsurpassed in sublimity and grandeur, describes a Theophany, or personal manifestation of the Lord. Natural phenomena supply the imagery, and are described with the minute and graphic accuracy charac-

teristic of Hebrew poetry : earthquake followed by dense smoke, an outburst of flame, and showers of burning coals ; then heavy clouds, thick darkness, a sound as of chariot-wheels sped by rushing winds ; black thunder-clouds rifted by sudden flashes, then the crash of thunder, Jehovah's voice ; hailstones intermingled with frequent lightnings. In the brief account of David's victories (1 Sam. 8) no mention is made of natural convulsions, but it is hard to resist the impression that the Psalmist describes a storm which he saw, and in which he realized the outward manifestation of God's Presence.

Cook.

I know not anything in all Greek, Latin, or English poetry that matches the sublimity and grandeur, the magnificent sweep, of this description of the providence of God as manifested in the phenomena of nature. It is Hebraistic to the core ; Gentile poetry has nothing like it. *F. Bowen.*—No comment can heighten and no translation can adequately represent, while none can altogether destroy, the unapproachable magnificence of the description which follows, of the majestic coming forth of God in answer to his cry. It stands at the very highest point, even when compared with the other sublime passages of a like kind in Scripture. *A. M.*

7-19. David's deliverance was, of course, not really accompanied by such convulsions of nature, by earthquake and fire and tempest, but his deliverance, or rather his manifold deliverances, gathered into one, as he thinks of them, appear to him as marvellous a proof of the Divine power, as verily effected by the immediate presence and finger of God, as if He had come down in visible form to accomplish them. The image is carefully sustained throughout. First, we have the earthquake, and then, as prelude to the storm and as herald of God's wrath, the blaze of the lightning (vs. 7, 8). Next, the thick gathering of clouds, which seem to touch and envelop the earth ; the wind, and the darkness, which shrouds Jehovah riding on the cherubim (9-11). Lastly, the full outburst of the storm, the clouds parting before the presence and glory of Jehovah, and pouring upon the earth the burden with which they were heavy—the thunder, and the lightning, and the hail—the weapons of Jehovah by which, on the one hand, He discomfits His enemies, and, on the other, lays bare the depths of the sea, and the very foundations of the world, that He may save His servant who trusts in Him (12-16). The image with which the description opened in v. 4, of a sinking, drowning man, is resumed in v. 16, and thus completes the whole.

In vs. 17-19 the figure is dropped, and the language falls into a lower key. *P.*

In order to thoroughly appreciate the beauty and truthfulness of the figure, we should endeavor to realize the full power of an Oriental storm, as it is described in Psalm 29. Solitary lightning precedes the discharge—this is meant by the *coals* in v. 8 ; the clouds approach the mountain summits—the *heavens bow*, as v. 9 has it ; the storm shakes its pinions ; enwrapped in thick clouds, as in a tent, God descends to the earth ; hail (not unfrequently attending Eastern storms) and lightning issue from the black clouds, through the dissolving layers of which is seen the fiery splendor which hides the Lord of nature. He speaks, and thunder is His voice ; He shoots, and flashes of lightning are His arrows. At His rebuke, and at the blast of His breath, the earth recedes—the sea foams up, and its beds are seen—the land bursts, and the foundations of the world are discovered. And lo ! an arm of deliverance issues forth from the black clouds, and the destructive fire grasps the wretched one who had cried out from the depths, pulls him forth, and delivers him from all his enemies ! Yes, the hand of the Lord has done marvellous things in the life of David. But the *eye of faith* alone could perceive in them all the hand of God. Thousands whose experiences of the delivering hand of God are not less signal than those of David, stop short at the powers of nature, and instead of bending the knee before the All-merciful God, content themselves to express with cold hearts their admiration of the changes of the destiny of man. *Tholuck.*

Every circumstance that can add to the splendor of Jehovah's descent upon His enemies is thrown into the narrative by the inspired poet. It is not enough that the heavens should bend beneath Him, and that clouds of darkness should be seen rolling, in terrible majesty, under His feet ; cherubic legions also are the willing supporters of His throne, and, swift as air, He flies "*upon the wings of the wind.*" Into this amazing scene the awful appendages of the mercy-seat are introduced ; on the bending heavens, the cloudy chariot rides sublime, and the winds of heaven bear it majestically along. *J. Morrison.*

16. The majestic self-revelation of God as the deliverer has for its occasion the Psalmist's cry of distress, and for its issue, "He drew me out of many waters." All the splendor flames out because a poor man prays, and all the upheaval of earth and the artillery of heaven has simply this for its end, that a poor man may be

delivered. The paradox of prayer never found a more bold expression than in this triumphant utterance, of the insignificant occasion for, and the equally insignificant result sought by, the exercise of the energy of Omnipotence. The Divine deliverance is set forth under the familiar image of the coming of God in a tempest. Before it bursts, and simultaneous with the prayer, the "earth rocks and quivers," the sunless "pillars of the hills reel and rock to and fro," as if conscious of the gathering wrath which begins to flame far off in the highest heavens. There has been no forth-putting yet of the Divine power. It is but accumulating its fiery energy, and already the solid framework of the world trembles, anticipating the coming crash. The firmest things shake, the loftiest bow before His wrath. A. M.

20-24. God deals with men according as He sees their heart to be toward Him. Those who walk before Him in simplicity and uprightness of heart may expect His succor. And David here, as in the last Psalm, asserts not his freedom from sin, but the consciousness of his own integrity. The general tenor of the Psalm everywhere breathes a spirit of confidence and trust in God, as far removed as possible from the spirit of self-righteousness. The words are, in truth, words of childlike, open-hearted simplicity, not of arrogant boastfulness. P.—The righteousness here claimed is not an absolute perfection or entire exemption from all sinful infirmity, but what Paul calls submission to the righteousness of God (Rom. 10 : 3), including faith in His mercy and a sincere governing desire to do His will. This is a higher and more comprehensive sense than innocence of some particular charge, or innocence in reference to man though not in reference to God. A.—No apology whatever is needed for the language of the Psalmists. It proceeds not out of any unseemly arrogance, but from "the free and princely heart of innocence." It is the childlike, joyful declaration of conscious integrity of purpose, and uprightness of heart toward God, as against all imputations of dissembling and hypocrisy. Paul had the same rejoicing in the testimony of his conscience, to his own "simplicity and godly sincerity." D. F.

21. I have not wickedly departed from my God—that is, with a purpose and resolution of heart to continue in a way of sinning; and that is the property of sincerity. A man indeed may be overtaken and surprised by a temptation, but it is not with a resolution to forsake God and to cleave unto the sin, or

rest in it. He will not sleep in it, spare it, or favor it.

23. I was upright before Him. Hence observe: first, that a godly man may have his heart upright and perfect even in the imperfection of his ways. Secondly, a man that is sincere is in God's account a perfect man; sincerity is the truth of all grace, the highest pitch that is to be attained here. Thirdly, sincerity of heart gives a man boldness even in the presence of God, notwithstanding many failings. It is a strange boldness that the saints have in the presence of God by virtue of the new covenant. All their sins shall be laid open at the last day as a cancelled bond; but the same spirit of sonship that shall give them perfect boldness then doth give them boldness in a great measure even now in this life; that they shall be able to say, "Neither height nor depth," nothing "shall separate us from the love of Christ." W. Strong.

25, 26. What he had previously mentioned as the method of God's dealings toward himself he now describes as a general law of the Divine administration. The essential idea is that God is, in a certain sense, to men precisely what they are to Him. The particular qualities specified are only given as examples, and might have been exchanged for others without altering the general sense. The form of expression is extremely strong and bold, but scarcely liable to misapprehension. No one is in danger of imagining that God can act perversely even to the most perverse. But the same course of proceeding which would be perverse in itself or toward a righteous person, when pursued toward a sinner becomes a mere act of vindictory justice. A.—God requites the ardent love of the godly man with cordial love, the entire surrender of the upright man with a full communication of grace, the striving after purity with an unreservedly loving mind, moral self-perversion with paradoxical judgments, by giving the perverse man over to his perverseness (Rom. 1 : 28) and leading him by strange ways to final damnation. D.

It is God's way to carry to men as they carry to Him. If thou hast a design to please Him, He will have a design to please thee; if thou wilt echo to Him when He calls, He'll echo to thee when thou callest. On the other side, if a man will wrestle with God, He will wrestle with him; if thou wilt be fast and loose with Him, and walk *frowardly* toward Him, thou shalt have as good as thou bringest; if thou wilt provoke Him with never-ending sins, He will pursue thee with never-ending torments.

R. Steele.—As all things are pure unto the pure, so all things are lovely unto the loving, all things good unto the good ; and, universally, such as thou art thyself, such is God Himself unto thee, though He is not a creature. He is perverse unto the perverse, and holy unto the holy. Hence nothing can be good or saving unto him who is evil ; nothing sweet unto him unto whom the law of God is not sweet. *Luther.*—God is pure and upright with the unclean and hypocritical as well as with the pure and upright, and His actions show Him to be so. God shows Himself froward with the froward when He deals with him as He hath said He will deal with the froward—deny them and reject them. God shows Himself pure with the pure when He deals with them as He hath said He will—hear them and accept them. Though there be nothing in purity and sincerity which deserveth mercy, yet we cannot expect mercy without them. Our comforts are not grounded upon our graces, but our comforts are the fruits or consequences of our graces. *Caryl.*

These declarations concerning God, in which human emotions and changes in these emotions are attributed to Him, are not to be regarded purely as figurative expressions. They actually express *real relations* of God to the world, and are only designated after the analogy of human conditions. If a change of such conditions is spoken of, this means only a change of the *relation* in which the Divine holiness, which is in itself changeless, enters to changeable man. The same God whose guidance approves itself to the pious as pure and good must appear like a malicious power to the perverse whose path He crosses. *O.*—By the very necessity of our moral nature God appears to man what man is to God : loving to the loving, upright to the upright, pure to the pure, and froward to the froward. Our thoughts of God are shaped by our moral character ; the capacity of perceiving depends on sympathy. “ Unless the eye were light, how could it see the sun ? ” The self-revelation of God in His providence, of which only the Psalm speaks, is modified according to our moral character, being full of love to those who love, being harsh and antagonistic to those who set themselves in opposition to it. There is a higher law of grace, whereby the sinfulness of man but draws forth the tenderness of a father’s pardoning pity ; and the brightest revelation of His love is made to froward prodigals. But that is not in the Psalmist’s view here, nor does it interfere with the law of retribution in its own sphere. *A. M.*

27. With the froward, the impetuous, the headstrong, the men who act from the impulse of their own intractable wills, God will evince a strength and determination of will that shall utterly overmaster and overthrow them. It is thus that while He saves the afflicted people He brings down the high looks. *Chalmers.*

28. My lamp. The lamp lighted in the house is the image at once of *prosperity* and *continuance* of life and happiness. On the other hand, the extinction of the royal race is compared to the quenching of the lamp (2 Sam. 21 : 17). *P.*

Lighten my darkness. Three dark shadows fall across every human life. There is, first of all, the shadow of *sin*. It falls dark and thick upon the life of human beings. Sin is the transgression in will or in fact of the eternal moral law, of that law which, unlike the law of nature, could not be other than what it is unless God could be other than what He is, of that law which is not an arbitrary enactment of His will, but the outflow of the expression of His very being. Sin thus is the contradiction of God, the resistance of the created will to the will of the Creator. And this resistance means darkness, not in the sky above our heads, but, far worse, darkness in the moral nature, darkness in the moral intelligence, darkness at the centre of the soul. There is also the shadow of *pain*. As the races and generations pass, whatever else may distinguish them from each other, whatever else they may have in common, they pass each and all, sooner or later, under the weird shadow of pain. How to deal with pain, how to alleviate it, how to do away with it—these have been questions which men have discussed for thousands of years ; and anodynes there are, such as they are, for pains of body and pains of mind, anodynes of very varying moral worth, but of which this much must be said, that they do but at most curtail the fringe of the great realm of pain. And there is the shadow of *death*. The thought that death must come at last casts over thousands of lives a deep gloom. There is the uncertainty of the time and manner of its approach ; there is the unimaginable experience of what in itself it will be ; there is the dread of what may or may not follow it. Sin, pain, death—these are the three shadows that fall across the life of men in this day of preparation for the great future ; and that our Lord makes these dark shadows to be light is the experience in all ages of thousands of Christians. Only a robust faith in the unseen, only the faith of our Lord and God, can relieve the human heart when face to face

with these solemn and irremovable conditions of our human life. So long as they last, the religion of the Crucified will last too. H. P. L.

29. By thee I have run through a troop. David ascribes his victories to God, declaring that, under His conduct, he *had broken through the wedges or phalanxes* of his enemies, and had taken by storm their fortified cities. Thus we see that, although he was a skilled and valiant warrior, he arrogates nothing to himself. *Calvin.*

30. The word of the Lord is tried. Like silver refined in the furnace. The doctrines are glorious, the precepts are pure, the promises are faithful, and the whole revelation is superlatively full of grace and truth. David had tried it, thousands have tried it, and it has never failed. S.—Christ's own teaching, the doctrine of His apostles, the tradition of the Jews, the universal consent of the Christian Church of all times, place the Divine authority of both Old and New Testaments on a foundation which cannot be moved. To let go the blessed truth of the plenary inspiration of Holy Scripture is to lose the sheet anchor of Revelation, and to drift away toward the dark and restless sea of human speculation, and *science, falsely so called.* But there is internal as well as external evidence of this inspiration; hundreds and thousands of simple Christians, who know nothing of argument or controversy, have discovered, through the witness of God's Spirit in their own hearts, that the Bible is the very voice of God; and there is no argument half so efficacious with the great majority of readers, for proving the Divine authorship of Scripture, as the spiritual, hallowing influence that the Bible itself seems to breathe over us when we bring ourselves into real contact with its contents. *Bishop Thorold.*

The company of the Divine Scriptures is a haven free from billows, a wall that cannot be broken, a tower that cannot be shaken, a glory that cannot be taken away, armor impenetrable, gladness imperishable, pleasure uninterrupted, and every good thing you can mention. It keeps off sadness, it preserves cheerfulness, it makes the poor man wealthier than the rich, it compasses the rich with security, it makes the sinner righteous, it places the righteous in safe keeping, it plucks up evils that exist, it plants the good that existed not, it drives away wickedness, it leads back to virtue—and not only so, but it roots virtue in men, and makes it remain steadfast; it is a spiritual medicine, a Divine, mysterious spell, a destroyer of passions. *Chrysostom.*—Of all books, the Bible loses

least of its force and dignity and beauty from being translated into other languages, wherever the translation is not erroneous. One version may indeed excel another, in that its diction may be more expressive, or simple, or more majestic; but in every version the Bible contains the sublimest thoughts uttered in plain and fitting words. It was written for the whole world, not for any single nation or age; and though its thoughts are above common thoughts, they are so as coming from the primal Fountain of Truth. *Anon.*

The Word of the Lord is tried in respect of *endurance.* Think how much the Bible has had to stand from *the mere lapse of time.* Every one knows that it is the oldest book in the world; that it is as old, some part of it, and perhaps older, than the pyramids of Egypt; that it is perhaps the oldest human monument as it certainly is the oldest human writing in existence; that the part of it to which David referred was already hundreds of years old in his time, when not a single book of any nation besides that has come down to us yet existed; and that the very latest part of it has an age of nearly eighteen centuries. All that time the Bible has had no miraculous guard upon it; no sacred ark, except for a comparatively brief period, to enshrine it; no company of angels to keep watch around it; no caste of priests even, or learned men, to hand it down as their sole business from age to age. It has been submitted to the chances of all other writings; its original copies have long perished; it has been left to the care of those who loved it to transcribe it, to preserve it, to keep it separate from other books, like the Apocrypha, calling themselves, or called by others, Divine. It has come down to us with the marks of time upon it—such slighter changes as occur even now in the misprints of our Bibles or the errors of spelling, and occasionally in so putting one word for another as would be done by some hundreds of scholars if they were all set to copy the same piece of writing. Yet the Bible, either in the Old Testament or in the New, has suffered no essential change in all these processes of transcription from age to age. It has been attacked by argument and sophistry. A long line of unbelievers, unhappily not yet ended, have directed against it every kind of missile that bore the shape of reasoning, denying its miracles, affirming that its prophecies were mere guesses or written after the event, denouncing its morality as narrow, gloomy, and bigoted, controverting its history, and triumphing in its fancied contradictions—accusing its

doctrine now of being a mere theft from human reason, and now of being a flagrant outrage to it, and assailing its hopes and revelations of the future as no better than delusion and enthusiasm. Multitudes more that could not reason could mock, could shoot out the lip and wag the head at the Bible, as if it were at length expiring on the cross—could make it the jest of the profane and the song of the drunkard, reading it only to extract materials of ribaldry, and dealing with it as Herod with Christ—to array it in a fool's dress and send it away, as fit only to be the serious care of dotage and superstition. All this has been; and yet what is the result! Where are the tyrants, the sophists, the mockers and blasphemers? We will not judge them: that belongs to God. But we know where the Bible is, after this torrent of violence and breath of slander, as from the bottomless pit, has to some extent spent its rage. It is read, and the books written against it are unread; it endures, and they are forgotten. The Bible has been tried and has come forth as gold. Their opposition has only developed its energies; their strokes only drawn forth, like the axe from the sandal-tree, its perfumes and odors. They came to curse, but the curse has been turned into a blessing; and the Church has had its faith in the Bible only strengthened by the unsuccessful attacks of all its adversaries, and can triumphantly say, in a way it could not before such onsets were made, "Where is the wise? where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? The Bible has been tried in point of *efficiency*. It deals with infinity and eternity. It lifts man from hell to heaven, from earth to God. It secures pardon, purity, peace with God; hope beyond the grave. What other book even proposes so much, far less effects it? We see men who were distressed and spirit-broken through the terrors of guilt finding in the Bible a peace that irradiates their countenances, and shines through their lives. We see those who grovelled in the dust elevated by it, as by a magnet, toward the skies. We see those who trembled like an aspen leaf at the very mention of death in the state of nature, and passed every hour by day and upon their bed in sad foreboding of its approach, meet it at length cheerfully, with the Bible clasped in their embrace, and confronting the last enemy with a word that prostrated him, and opened a level path to heaven: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Show us achievements like these attempted or realized in any other quarter than where the

Bible holds sway, and then we will admit that its trial is indecisive! *Cairns.*

Unto all them that trust in Him.

In the midst of the clearest and strongest statements of God's Word some people are not willing to believe that God will do all that He promises; whereas, if they did take hold of the Word of God with a firm grasp, it would lift them up into the very atmosphere of heaven. Now what we want is a faith in God that shall be somewhat suitable to His infinite grace and to our needs—a faith steady as the nature and promises of God Himself—as broad and as comprehensive as the promises of God to man. *Bishop Andrews.*

31-45. For this division of the Psalm the way has already been prepared in vs. 28-30, as descriptive both of what God is and of the help which He had vouchsafed to His servant. David now dwells in a strain of triumph on the victories and successes which God had given him. The central thought is the relation in which David stands to God. Before the holy God he has walked in his integrity (vs. 20-27); and therefore, on the one hand, God delivered him from his peril (4-19), and, on the other, made him victorious over all enemies (31-45).

35. Yet it is not the bow of brass which has been David's protection; but Jehovah's shield covered him; Jehovah's right hand held him up; Jehovah's wonderful condescension (by which he was taken from the sheepfolds to be king) made him great; Jehovah made room for him to stand, and subdued those that rose up against him. **Thy gentleness**, lit. "meekness," "lowliness," a very remarkable word as applied to God, and just one of those links connecting the Divine with the human, which in the Old Testament so strikingly foreshadow an incarnation. P.—The original word, as applied to men, means usually humility, lowliness; and as used of God, *condescension*, said, it would seem, with special reference to God's bending low to his prayer and coming down low, *i.e.*, from the high heavens above, in His glorious help. The Hebrew verb from which this noun comes means both to *answer* and to be *lowly*—ideas which naturally blend, for all answering implies more or less inclination toward, but especially is this true of God's answering to His lowly creature, man. C.

The God of revelation, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, hides His power and withholds the stress of His will, that He may put confidence and courage in the feeling of His children. Let us not shrink then from this epithet of Scripture, as if it must imply some

derogation from God's real greatness and majesty ; for precisely here do His greatness and majesty culminate. It means that He does not set Himself, as a ruler, to drive His purpose straight through, but that, consciously wise and right, abiding in His purposes with majestic confidence, and expecting to reign with a finally established supremacy, He is only too great to fly at His adversary, and force him to the wall, if he does not instantly surrender ; that, instead of coming down upon him thus, in a manner of direct onset, to carry His immediate submission by storm, He lays gentle siege to him, waiting for his willing assent and choice. He allows dissent for the present, defers to prejudice, watches for the cooling of passion, gives room and space for the weaknesses of our unreasonable and perverse habit to play themselves out, and so by leading us round, through long courses of kind but faithful exercise, He counts on bringing us out into the ways of obedience and duty freely chosen. Force and crude absolutism are thus put by ; the irritations of a jealous littleness have no place ; and the great God and Father, intent on making His children great, follows them and plies them with the gracious indirections of a faithful and patient love. *Bushnell.*

Spiritual greatness — sanctified character. beauty of soul, the likeness of God upon the life, heart-qualities—shall endure forever. Into this true spiritual greatness God wants to train every one of us. Many Christians grow sadly disheartened because they seem never to become any better. Year after year the struggle goes on with the old tempers and ugly dispositions, the old selfishness, pride and hatefulness, and they appear never to be growing victorious. Yet Christ is a most patient teacher. He never wearies of our slowness and dulness as scholars. He will teach the same lesson over and over until we have learned it. If we only persevere, He will never tire of us, and His gentleness will make us great. J. R. M.

Consider how the gentleness of a loving correction makes God's children great. For we ought, all of us, to wish to be great—great in the school of Christ, great in the Divine life, great in holiness, great in usefulness. A real sorrow takes us out of the old groove of triviality ; it restores things to their right proportion, making the little great and the great little. Correction, whatever else it does, sets a man free, and puts him in a position that he may become great. A time of sorrow is and must be a time of thought. And what most of us want is to be brought really to think. It is not

too much to say that every one who is at the pains to think and to think truly will become great. But it specially leads us to think about our own state before God, for as soon as ever we are in sorrow it is in the gentleness of God that He wishes to comfort us. J. V.

He wants no slaves about His throne. He refuses, therefore, to subdue us unless by some such method that we may seem, in a certain other sense, to subdue ourselves. Most true it is that He carries a strong hand with us. He covers up no principle, tempers the exactness of no law. There is no connivance in His methods, no concealment of truths disagreeable and piercing, no proposition of compromise or halving in a way of settlement. His providence moves strong. His terrors flame out on the background of a wrathful sky. He thunders marvellously with His voice. And so His very gentleness stands glorious and strong and sovereignly majestic round us. Were He only soft or kind, bending like a willow to our wicked state, there were little to move and affect us even in His goodness itself. But when we look on Him as the Almighty Rock, the immovable Governor and Keeper of the worlds, girding Himself in all terrible majesty when He must, to let us know that impunity in wrong is impossible, then it is that we behold Him in the true meaning of His gentleness—how good ! how firm ! how adorably great ! Come nigh, O thou sinning, weary prodigal, and acknowledge and receive in blissful welcome the true greatness of thy God ! Be not jealous any more that religion is going to depress your manly parts, or weaken the strength of your high aspirations. In your lowest humiliations and deepest repentances you will be consciously raised and exalted. Every throb of heaven's life in your bosom will be only a throb of greatness. Every good affection, every holy action, into which your God may lead you, all your bosom struggles, your hungers, and tears, and prostrations, will be the travailing only of a princely birth, and a glorious sonship with God. *Bushnell.*

In the temper which is most fitted to be victorious over sin, the warp of a sunny gentleness must be woven across the woof of a strong character. That will make the best tissue to stand the wear and tear of the world's trials. Our Lord was divinely gentle, but He was also strong with a wondrous strength and firmness. *W. H. Lyttleton.*—Where there is great strength, full of sweet and gentle dealing, there is gentleness in its most perfect form. And the true Christian disposition is seen when a man is

clothed with all manner of vigor and power and knowledge and intuition, and carries them in the midst of an offending, sinful world, not only with the utmost longsuffering, but with extreme gentleness. *Anon.*—God is calling us even to be great, great in courage and candor, steadfast in honor and truth, immovable in our promises, heroic in our sacrifices, right, and bold, and holy—men whom He is training, by His own great spirit, for a world of great sentiment, and will, and might, and majesty. Be it ours to live, then, with a sense of our high calling upon us, abiding in all the holy magnanimities of love, honor, sacrifice and truth; sincere, exact, faithful, bountiful and free; showing thus to others and knowing always in ourselves that we do steadily aspire to just that height of good into which our God Himself has undertaken to exalt us. *Bushnell.*

36-45. That which makes him victorious is not the brazen bow by itself, but the helping strength of his God. Jehovah's salvation covered him like a shield, from which every blow of the enemy rebounded; Jehovah's right hand supported him, so that his hands did not become weak in battle. So fighting in God's strength, with God's weapons, and with God's assistance, he smote, overthrew, destroyed all his enemies both in foreign and in civil wars. *D.*

46-50. The hymn now concludes with the praise of Jehovah, who had done so great things for David and for his seed. And as Jehovah has not only placed him on the throne of Jerusalem, but has given him dominion over foreign nations, he will proclaim among these also the name and the praises of his God. Here we have the first utterance of a hope, which in later times became clear and distinct, that the heathen should learn to fear and worship Jehovah. *P.*

46. Again he recurs to the one thought which flows like a river of light through all the Psalm—that all his help is in God. The names which he lovingly heaped together at the beginning are in part echoed in the close. "The Lord liveth, and blessed is my rock, and the God of my salvation is exalted." His deliverances have taught him to know a living God, swift to hear, active to help, in whom he lives, who has magnified His own name in that He has saved His servant. *A. M.*

Honors *die*, pleasures *die*, the world *dies*; but "*the Lord liveth.*" My flesh is as *sand*; my fleshly life, strength, glory, is as *a word written on sand*; but "*blessed be my Rock.*" Those are for a moment; this stands forever. Let outward salvations vanish; let the saved

be crucified; let the "*God*" of our salvations "*be exalted.*" This Lord is *my rock*; this God is *my salvation.* *Peter Sterry.*

The whisper in the heart of the moral fool, "There is no God," can never add to his stock of moral strength. This faith of the Psalmist, "The Lord liveth," is at once followed by the exclamation, "and blessed be my strong helper, and praised be the God of my salvation." The soul cannot rest upon the void which is the result of that vast negation; it can and does draw comfort, strength, support, determination, as it grasps and leans upon this greatest of all assertions. *Liddon.*—Were we but familiar with this kind of reasoning with God, how undaunted we should be in all troubles! We should be as secure in time to come as for the time past; for all is one with God. We do exceedingly wrong our own souls and weaken our faith by not minding God's favors. Every former mercy should strengthen our faith for a new, as conquerors whom every former victory encourageth to a new conquest. *Sibbes.*

49. Paul quotes this verse (Rom. 15: 9), as well as Deut. 32: 43, and Psalm 117: 1, as proof that the salvation of Christ belonged, in the purpose of God, to the Gentiles as well as the Jews. The Psalm therefore looks beyond David. David and David's rule over the nations are but a type and image of Christ, and of that spiritual kingdom which he came to establish. *P.*

50. In Christ, the son of David, David's fallen throne has lasting continuance, and in Him everything that was promised to David's seed has eternal truth and reality. According to its final purport, the praise of Jehovah, the God of David, His anointed, is praise of the Father of Jesus Christ. *D.*

David. This is the only passage in which David names himself; it may be with reference to the special promise through Nathan "to thy servant David," or because the Psalm was intended for public recitation, reminding the whole nation of the grounds on which their allegiance to the house of David rested. The question whether the text of the Psalm is more ancient or more accurate in the Book of Samuel or here has been much discussed. Both texts have internal proofs of independence and originality; in fact, it is now admitted that neither could have been taken from the other, nor are the deviations generally such as could be accounted for by inaccurate transcription. The most natural and probable explanation is, that David toward the close of his reign prepared a revision for public recitation. *Cook.*

PSALM XIX.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN. A PSALM OF DAVID.

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| <p>1 THE heavens declare the glory of God ;
And the firmament sheweth his handy-
work.</p> <p>2 Day unto day uttereth speech,
And night unto night sheweth knowledge.</p> <p>3 There is no speech nor language ;
Their voice cannot be heard.</p> <p>4 Their line is gone out through all the
earth,
And their words to the end of the world.</p> <p>5 In them hath he set a tabernacle for the
sun,
Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his
chamber,
And rejoiceth as a strong man to run his
course.</p> <p>6 His going forth is from the end of the
heaven,
And his circuit unto the ends of it :
And there is nothing hid from the heat
thereof.</p> <p>7 The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring
the soul :
The testimony of the LORD is sure, making
wise the simple.</p> | <p>8 The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoic-
ing the heart :
The commandment of the LORD is pure,
enlightening the eyes.</p> <p>9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for
ever :
The judgments of the LORD are true, <i>and</i>
righteous altogether.</p> <p>10 More to be desired are they than gold, yea,
than much fine gold :
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.</p> <p>11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned :
In keeping of them there is great reward.</p> <p>12 Who can discern <i>his</i> errors ?
Clear thou me from hidden <i>faults</i>.</p> <p>13 Keep back thy servant also from presump-
tuous <i>sins</i> ;
Let them not have dominion over me : then
shall I be perfect,
And I shall be clear from great transgres-
sion.</p> <p>14 Let the words of my mouth and the medita-
tion of my heart be acceptable in thy
sight,
O LORD, my rock, and my redeemer.</p> |
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THIS Psalm consists of two distinct parts, in which are contrasted God's revelation of Himself in nature and His revelation of Himself in His Word. It speaks first of His glory as seen in the heavens, and then of His glory as manifested in His law. It may have been written, perhaps, in the first flush of an Eastern sunrise, when the sun was seen "going forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber, and rejoicing as a mighty man to run his course." The song breathes all the life and freshness, all the gladness and glory of the morning. The devout singer looks out, first, on the works of God's fingers, and sees all creation bearing its constant though silent testimony to its Maker ; and then he turns himself with a feeling of deep satisfaction to that yet clearer and better witness concerning Him to be found in the inspired Scriptures. Thus he begins the day ; thus he prepares himself for the duties that await him, for the temptations that may assail, and the sorrows that may gather as a cloud about him. He has made trial of the preciousness of that word. He knows its deep, hallow-

ing, soul-sustaining power. He knows that it is full of life and healing. But he knows also that it is a word that searches and tries the heart, that reveals the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man ; and therefore he bows himself in prayer, saying, "As for errors—who can understand them ? Cleanse thou me from secret faults." P.

This Psalm is in two parts : in the first (vs. 1-6) the visible heavens come before us as witnesses for God ; in the second (vs. 7-14) God's written law is presented, both in its qualities and in its moral effects. Comprehensively we might say here is, first, *nature* ; secondly, *revelation*. Both are thought of as *books* from God ; both as proclaiming His character, witnessing to His glorious majesty and His matchless wisdom and beneficence. The Psalm has been admired in all ages for its exquisite poetry, its comprehensive and pertinent thought, and for its sublime moral lessons. C.—The object of the Psalm is not to contrast the moral and material revelations, but rather to identify their author and their subject. The doctrinal sum-

of the whole composition is, that the same God who reared the frame of nature is the giver of a law, and that this law is in all respects worthy of its author. A.

Let it be noted that the names of the Deity used here are not taken up at random, but are wisely chosen. "El," the Mighty One, the Great Creator and Ruler of all, is He whose glory the heavens are telling. It is *as* such a glorious Creator and disposer of all the worlds in space that the heavens are forever proclaiming His glory. On the other hand, the giver of the law (vs. 7-14) is "Jehovah," the God of the Covenant, the God of the promises, the God who first revealed the significance of this name, "Jehovah," to Moses and to Israel (Ex. 6 : 3 and 3 : 11-15), in calling His people forth from Egypt and giving them then His moral law together with statutes and judgments under which they might walk in communion with Him as their revealed Lord and Father. C.

This Psalm, universally regarded as one of the profoundest and most affecting of David's compositions, is especially remarkable for the vivid contrast, and at the same time the inner harmony, which it recognizes between the results of natural and revealed religion. The heavens, as Bacon observes, declare the glory, but not the will of God : that is known only by His law, revealed to man as the perfect expression of that will, for his conversion, instruction and guidance. Cook.

No natural scene or object in the Old Testament is ever pictured for its own sake, to leave the impression of itself. The Psalmist gazes at the starry heavens by night, he views the wondrous march of the sun by day, but his words are no pen-pictures of these brilliant objects ; no, these are nothing in themselves, only in their grandeur speaking silently of God. E. L. Curtis.—"The glory of God" is no other than the glorious qualities of His character—His wisdom, power, and beneficence. Everything in this vast field of nature above our heads is magnificent and beautiful, grand in its order and method, vast in its proportions, and, above all, beneficent in its provisions of light and heat for the good of man and of all sentient beings. C.—Nature is but one grand symbol by which God shadows forth His own invisible Being and character—and the chief glory of nature lies not in her vastness or her order—in the beauty and grandeur of her forms, or the exquisite harmony of her adaptations—but in this, that rock and stream and star and sea, the gleam of her sunshine and the gloom and mystery of her night, the voice of

her waters and the silent majesty of her hills—all her mute and material and all her animate creatures alike are but types and symbols of the invisible and eternal glory of Him concerning whom "day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night teacheth knowledge." Caird.

1. The Psalm opens with the impression produced on the poet's mind by the magnificence and the order of creation. Of the two clauses of this verse, the first states the *fact* that the heavens publish God's glory ; the second explains *how* this is done—viz., by testifying that He has made them. This is the true meaning of the heavens and their pomp. That splendor which fills their arch, that beauty which so attracts the eye, that everlasting order by which day and night follow in sweet vicissitude—these things are not the offspring of chance ; they are not the evolution of some blind spirit enchained within the mass which it vivifies ; much less are they the work of some evil power whose kingdom and whose triumph are to be seen in the material universe. God created them, and they show forth His glory. His fingers fashioned them. He clothed them with light as with a garment, and put the sun in the midst of them to show forth His praise. P.—When we contemplate the celestial bodies, can we fail of conviction ? Must we not acknowledge that there is a Divinity, a perfect Being, a ruling intelligence, which governs ; a God who is everywhere and directs all by His power ? Anybody who doubts this may as well deny there is a sun that lights us. Time destroys all false opinions, but it confirms those which are formed by nature. Cicero.

Would you gain some idea of the *Wisdom* of God, look to the admirable adjustments of the magnificent retinue of planets and satellites which sweep around the sun. Every globe has been weighed and poised, every object has been measured and bent to its beautiful form. All is changing, but the laws fixed by the wisdom of God, though they permit the rocking to and fro of the system, never introduce disorder or lead to destruction. All is perfect and harmonious, and the music of the spheres that burn and roll around our sun is echoed by that of ten millions of moving worlds, that sing and shine around the bright suns that reign above. O. M. Mitchell.—Turn to the millions of stars in the Milky Way. Our sun is neither more nor less than just one, and one unimportant, star in that Milky Way. To David, when he said that the heavens declared the glory of God, only were known two or three thousand stars visible to the naked eye. To us are known

somewhere about fifty millions. To us is known that the Galaxy is but the fused light of stars innumerable, that the nebulae of the Centaur and the clouds of Magellan are composed of star clusters so infinitely distant that, though separated from us by abysses of the heaven, they seem by myriads to touch each other, so that our whole solar system would be but a speck in the infinite expanse; and that our whole firmament is but one of some five thousand firmaments, and that each one of those so-called fixed stars is a flaming sun, perhaps with its attendant planets, of which the nearest of all—the star Sirius—is supposed to be fifteen times larger than our own sun, and is rushing away from the earth at the rate of twenty miles a second, and yet separated from us by a space so inconceivably immeasurable that it is as bright as it was two thousand years ago. And, yet, I say again that the Christian is not in the least appalled by all this vastness. Space is nothing to that God who extends through all extent, and in the hollow of whose hand all those worlds lie as though they were but a single waterdrop. *Farrar.*

See what the stellar universe reveals concerning God. Wherever we look, however profoundly we penetrate the depths of space, we find, so far as we can see, one power, one law, one reasonable intelligence pervading and controlling all; an intelligence which we can recognize as harmonizing with our own wherever we can follow it. We find distant worlds moving just as they would move if the same law of gravitation prevailed with them as it does with us; and terrestrial mathematics, mechanics, and optics apply to them as well as to the earth. Meteors fall, and bring us from interplanetary space only familiar elements. In the luminous music of the rays of distant stars we detect familiar indications of familiar earthly substances. In the spectrum of such a star as Capella, iron and sodium, magnesium and hydrogen, manifest themselves precisely as they do in our sun, or on the earth. The heavens declare the essential unity of matter, and inferentially that of God Himself. *C. A. Young.*

Nature and the supernatural are generous witnesses for God; they vie with each other in the richness of their testimony. The wide campus of matter swept by microscope and telescope as far as yonder picket nebula is everywhere covered with hieroglyphics of Him which no Champollion is needed to decipher, everywhere tracked with His giant foot-prints vastly more scientifically intelligible than any of these fossil scriptures which so nobly enrich our mu-

seums; while the supernatural evidence carries itself still more regally in a God who has often spoken audibly with men; has often stood among them in visible personal forms; has made the future visible, the dead to live, the earth to tremble, the heavens to blaze, the angels to fly singly or in armies along the sky in attestation of Himself; indeed, has even personally come down in presence of forewarned and expecting hosts, embosomed in a storm of miracles and with ineffable pomp; and, finally, has scattered these direct manifestations and these attesting miracles, with their diaconate of special providences, through the ages as liberally as can be shown consistent with their best effect, bridging the intervals between them with well-accredited and well-believed traditions from amid whose mighty arches and colonnades and picturing perspectives they can, not improbably, be seen to better advantage by the majority of mankind than from the portico itself. *Burr.*

The upholding of the world is a continual causing of it. If therefore the creation do wonderfully declare the power and wisdom and goodness of God, so also doth the conservation. And is it not as great a declaration of the power of God that He causes the sun to shine, and to keep its wondrous course from age to age, as if He did such a thing but for a day or hour? and as if He caused it to stand still a day? And is it not as great a demonstration of His knowledge also, and of His goodness? *Barter.*

2. *Day to day shall pour out speech, and night to night shall utter knowledge.* Both verbs are peculiar to the poetical dialect and books of the Old Testament. *Pour out*, in a copious, evergushing stream. *Speech* means the declaration of God's glory, and *knowledge* the knowledge of the same great object. The idea of perpetual testimony is conveyed by the figure of one day and night following another as witnesses in unbroken succession. A.—To the personification of the heavens succeeds that of day and night. The words may either be rendered as in the text, or “one day after another,” “day after day, night after night.” This verse expresses not so much the progressive character, as the never-failing continuance of the testimony. There is no pause, no change in the stately procession; none of them thrusts or breaks his ranks; forever they abide the same.

3. No speech and no words; their voice is not heard; lit. “is inaudible.” This seems to be a kind of correction or explanation of the bold figure which had ascribed

language to the heavens. They have a language, but not one that can be classed with any of the dialects of earth. They have a voice, but one that speaks not to the ear, but to the devout and understanding heart. P.—Though day and night are silent in their coming and going, though they utter no audible voice, no articulate speech, yet do they give forth a testimony for God co-extensive with the earth and the heaven. “Like an unbroken chain, their message is delivered from day to day, and from night to night. At the silence of one herald, another takes up his speech; and holy silence itself is a speech to the listening soul.” J. P. T.—Luther’s rendering is, “There is no language nor speech, where one does not hear their voice,” *i.e.*, as Calvin also explains it: the testimony of the heavens to God is understood by the peoples of all languages and tongues. D.

The Psalmist adds, *no words*, to show that he here uses *speech* in the strict sense of articulate language. The absence of articulate language, far from weakening the testimony, makes it stronger. Even without speech or words, the heavens testify of God to all men. A.—The lessons of day and night it were well if all men learned. It should be among our day-thoughts and night-thoughts to remember the flight of time, the changeful character of earthly things, the brevity both of joy and sorrow, the preciousness of life, our utter powerlessness to recall the hours once flown, and the irresistible approach of eternity. Day bids us labor, night reminds us to prepare for our last home; day bids us work for God, and night invites us to rest in Him; day bids us look for endless day, and night warns us to escape from everlasting night. S.

4. Once more, this testimony is not only full and clear and unbroken, it is universal. Everywhere the heavens span and compass the earth, and everywhere they preach the same Divine sermon. P.—The revelation is universal, continuous, copious. Every day pours forth the story, as full streams flow from inexhaustible sources; and night is represented as breathing knowledge, imparting it freely and without stint. True, there is no speech and there are no words. No lips are seen to move, no articulate sentences are heard. Yet no oratory is so penetrating nor reaches so far. Their line goes out into all the earth, and their unspoken words are heard in all the habitable world. It is a beautiful picture. The line is the string of a lyre or harp, and so comes to stand for the sound which the harp emits when its strings

are swept by the hand. Nature is a harp, whose vibrating tones reach to the earth’s boundaries, over mountains and seas, into desert and cave, through all the heights and all the depths, and wherever men go to build their homes, they hear the sweet and familiar music. And that music is the glory of God—His power, His wisdom, His unchanging goodness. These home voices precede and follow us; make populous and radiant the bleakest solitude. Never are you alone; never need you lack for inspiring and profitable companionship. *Behrends*.—How vast and precious an influence would these scenes and elements of nature exert in building up our being, if we were properly alive to them! There would be “transferred into the internal economy of ideas and sentiment something of a character and a color correspondent to the beauty, vicissitude, and grandeur which continually press upon the senses.” And this internal economy of ideas and sentiment, of which John Foster so beautifully speaks, would not be intellectual merely, but full of the sense of God and heaven. There would be the home-feeling of a father’s house, the tracing of a father’s hand, the sense of a father’s presence, the enjoyment of every natural blessing by a father’s kind arrangements. When God Himself is in the soul, diffusing there the spirit of His love, how every created particle of matter and variety of form shines in His light! *Cheever*.

5, 6. He sweeps athwart the heavens from the distant East to the farthest West, and nothing can escape the heat of his beams. Vegetation starts into fresh life at his touch; all living things and creatures rejoice in his light and heat. His ministrics of good pervade the wide earth from the end of heaven, the eastern horizon, to the uttermost end of it on the face of the western sky. C.—This vast, portentous globe of fire is made to subserve the humblest purposes of man. It is but one thirty-second millionth of this sun’s light that this earth receives; and yet that mere fraction of its effluence gives man temperate warmth. It gives him golden days. It evaporates the waters. It ripens the fruit. It quickens the seedling. It tinges the odorous blossom of the rose. When we know what the sun is—what it does for us—ought not three thousand years of additional knowledge to have infused new adoration and new intensity into David’s words? “It goeth forth from the uttermost part of the heaven, and runneth about unto the end of it again; and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.” And yet the sun—nay, even our

whole solar system—is a mere nothing—is no more in the sidereal heavens than a mote in that sun's beam. *Farrar.*

There is nothing hid from the heat thereof. This is literally the case. The earth receives its heat from the sun, and by conduction, a part of it enters the crust of our globe. By convection, another portion is carried to the atmosphere, which it warms. Another portion is radiated into space, according to laws yet imperfectly understood, but which are evidently connected with the color, chemical composition, and mechanical structure of parts of the earth's surface. At the same time the ordinary state of the air, consisting of gases and vapor, modifies the heat rays and prevents scorching. Thus, the solar heat is equalized by the air. Nothing on earth or in air is hid from the heat of the sun. *E. Sidney.*

When the foundations of the globe were laid, there were collected in the atmosphere all the essential elements of organized beings. From this inexhaustible storehouse the plant absorbs water, carbonic acid, and ammonia, which were placed there for its use, and which have been made to serve as its nourishment and food. It is the special office of the plants to elaborate from these few mineral substances, and a small amount of earthy salts, all the materials of organized beings. The animal receives these crude materials already prepared, and builds with them its various tissues; but no sooner are the cell-walls finished, and the structure ready to discharge its vital functions, than it is consumed by almost the very act which gave it life. The carbonic acid, water, and ammonia are restored to the atmosphere, and the cycle is complete. Of this Divine economy the sun's rays are the great moving cause, and it is their mysterious power which is constantly reappearing in all the varied phases of organic life. And not in these alone; for this same gentle influence keeps in motion the aerial currents which blow our ships across the ocean. It raises the water which turns the wheels of our factories. It drives the locomotive over the iron road, and impels the steamer through the waves. It roars at the cannon's mouth, and charges the grander artillery of the skies. There is no motion on the globe which cannot be traced directly or indirectly to the sun, and were his rays to lose their mysterious power, all nature would become silent, motionless, and dead. Attempt to bring together in imagination all the energies acting at one moment on the earth, and unite them in one tremendous aggregate. Begin with the moving power of the air, the

hurricanes, the tornadoes, the storms, and the gentler winds which are everywhere at work from the Arctic to the Antarctic Pole, omitting in making the estimate, if you choose, the lightning and the thunder, which, though brilliant and noisy demonstrations of power, would hardly increase by a unit the vast sum. Add to this the mechanical power in the mighty flow of waters, the ocean currents, the rivers, the cataracts, the glacier-streams, and the avalanches, all over the globe. Bring into the calculation the forces at work in the various phases of animal and vegetable life. Remember the conflagrations, the furnaces, the fires, and the other manifestations of the terrible energies of the atmospheric oxygen, whenever it is aroused. Do not even forget the comparatively insignificant power which man is wielding with the aid of powder and of steam. Making now an immense allowance for what you must have overlooked, sum this all up—if you can without bewilderment—and what part is it of the whole? Why, it has been calculated that it is equal to but one 2,300,000,000th of the force which the sun is every moment pouring into space. And what is the sun? A small star in the infinitude of space, where shine Sirius and Arcturus, Regulus and Aldebaran, Procyon and Capella, with unnumbered others, all shedding forth a far mightier effluence than our feeble star; yet the grand total of the power streaming from all the suns which human eye has seen, or which still lie undiscovered in the depths of space, alone represents the active energy of the universe. Of two theories of causation, one regards this energy as an unintelligent power. The other sees in it simply the will of the Eternal Jehovah. Which is the more probable? *Cooke.*

The glorious sun is an eminent example of nature's testimony to God. For that great orb God has pitched a tent, and has fixed for it His law and its abiding-place. Its grand apparent march through the heavens, joyfully emerging from the chambers of the East, and climbing the heavenly vault, and then returning by an unseen path to the place whence it arose—all this presents at least one important manifestation of Divine power. Nor is the sun merely a grand processionist or a magnificent firework. It is a beneficent practical distributor of light and heat, "There is nothing hid from the heat thereof." This noble personification of the sun farther connects itself with the fact that in the spiritual world Christ is the "Sun of Righteousness," whose going forth is from everlasting, and who is the sole dispenser of salvation, as

the great orb of day is of material quickening to all nature. *J. W. Dawson.*—Conspicuous among this great company of singers and teachers is the sun, who as their chief never wearies in proclaiming the greatness and glory of God. Every morning he flings aside the curtains of darkness radiant and refreshed. He is eager for the race. He leaps upon the path like a man of might who does not know what to do with his superabundant strength. He takes no rest. He does not so much as stop to take breath in making the vast circuit from dawn to dawn, and with each daybreak he answers the call. Nothing is hidden from his heat. The mists scatter, the clouds melt away, the mountain-tops grow bare, the rivers break their icy fetters, the birds wake, the summer hastens, the harvests grow golden. We may judge the Maker by this single specimen of His handiwork. If the sun is so unwearied, so prompt and rapid, so mighty, pervasive and beneficent, what must He be who made the sun? This is the undertone: God is never weary, His resources are abundant. He moves with rapid and strong step, and nothing can resist His power, an energy which enlightens and enriches. Thus the sun suggests the very perfections of God which His word brings into clearer prominence and on which faith reposes. *Behrends.*

In looking to heaven as the model of our service, we need not pass by the visible heavens from which David so constantly drew lessons for himself. To see how God's will should be done, we have but to turn the eye to the "unworn sky," old in the service of God, but fulfilling His will as at first. We see the precise regularity which should characterize our service also. We see how unweariedly all perform their parts, the great sustaining the small, the small reflecting and enhancing the glory of the great; all as members of one system, obeying in peaceful harmony Him who calls them all by their names. We see how the sun morning after morning comes forth rejoicing to run his race, how the moon observes her appointed seasons, and the sun knoweth his going down; how all, though it be in an unvarying course, fulfil the will of God untiringly. *Dods.*—Every world sweeps round its orbit without the delay of a second; every planet completes its august circuit through the heavens to the instant; suns rise and set century after century, and the sublime movement of the universe goes forward without the loss of a moment. The heavens which declare the glory of God declare also His promptness; the business of the universe is always done on time. *Anon.*

The natural sun is a symbol of the spiritual. Ere he is fully arisen, and while his glories are still under veil, he calls up the breeze to chase away the usurping vapors of the night season, and thus converts the air itself into the minister of its own purification: not surely in proof or elucidation of the light from heaven, but to prevent its interception. For religion passes out of the ken of reason only where the eye of reason has reached its own horizon; and then faith is but its continuation; even as the day softens away into the sweet twilight, and twilight, hushed and breathless, steals into the darkness. It is night, sacred night! the upraised eye views only the starry heaven, which manifests itself alone; and the outward beholding is fixed on the sparks twinkling in the awful depth, though suns of other worlds, only to preserve the soul steady and collected in its pure act of inward adoration to the great I AM, and to the filial Word, that reaffirmeth it from eternity to eternity, whose choral echo is the universe. *Cole-ridge.*

What a glorious heaven is this which Thou hast spread over our heads! With how precious a vault hast Thou walled in this our inferior world! What worlds of light hast Thou set above us! These things which we see are wondrous, but those which we believe and see not are yet more. Thou dost but set out these unto view to show us what there is within. How proportionable are Thy works to Thyself! If the lowest pavement of that heaven of Thine be so glorious, what shall we think of the better parts yet unseen? And if this sun of Thine be of such brightness and majesty, oh, what is the glory of the Maker of it! And if such a sky be prepared for the use and benefit even of Thine enemies also upon earth, how happy shall those eternal tabernacles be which Thou hast sequestered for Thine own! *Bishop H.*

7-10. Despite the seeming abruptness, there is a point of connection between the two portions of the Psalm. What the sun is in the natural world, that the law is in the spiritual—the one quickens and cherishes all animal life, the other quickens and cherishes the life of the soul. *P.*—The transition from the one part of the Psalm to the other is not marked by anything external; it is indicated, however, by the circumstance that the Divine name Jehovah now takes the place of El. Whereas the word of nature reveals God as El, the word of Scripture reveals Him as Jehovah; the former proclaims God's power and glory, the latter also His counsel and will. The encomiums upon the law are warranted also from a New Testament point of

view. Even Paul says, "The law is holy and spiritual; the commandment is holy and righteous and good." The law deserves these encomiums in itself; and for him who stands in the state of grace, it is indeed no longer a law pronouncing a curse, but a mirror of the God who is gracious in holiness, a mirror into which he can look without slavish fear, and a rule of hearty and willing obedience. D.

The turn from the outer world to the better light of God's Word is most natural; the abruptness of it is artistic and impressive; the difference of style and measure gives emphasis to the contrast. There is also an obvious connection between the two parts, inasmuch as the law is described by epithets, which in part hint at its being a brighter sun, enlightening the eyes. The Word which declares the will of the Lord is better than the heavens which tell His glory. The abundance of synonyms for that word show how familiar to his thoughts it was. To him it is "the law," "the testimonies" by which God witnesses of Himself and of man: "the statutes," the fixed settled ordinances; that which teaches "the fear of God," the "judgments" or utterances of His mind on human conduct. They are "perfect, firm, right, clean, pure"—like that spotless sun—"eternal, true." "They quicken, make wise, enlighten," even as the light of the lower world. A. M.

The God whose glory is thus shown forth by the material creation is the author of a spiritual law, which the Psalmist now describes in the next three verses by six characteristic names, six qualifying epithets, and six moral effects produced by it. A.—Here are six corresponding and nearly parallel statements in three pairs, all treating of essentially the same written *law of God*, though under six different designations: "law," "testimony," "statutes," "commandments," "the fear of the Lord," and "His judgments;" in each case giving one defining characteristic in a single word, and then adding one statement as to its precious results or effects—all with the same systematic order. C.—The order in which the six words describing God's law occur should be observed: 1. The law, of which the fundamental principle is instruction (Heb. *thorah*, from *yarah*, teach). 2. The testimony, *i.e.*, warning; God's appeal to the conscience, bearing witness to the law. 3. Statutes, or, more exactly, visitations, securing obedience, or checking infringements of the law. 4. Commandments, *i.e.*, precepts, better understood as man advances under the teaching of the law. 5. The fear of God, the settled habit of the soul

informed by the law. 6. The judgments, the final awards of the Giver of the law. The omission of "*the Word*" is noticeable. David may have regarded it as synonymous with "the law;" and in this passage his object is specially to set forth the beauty of "the law" as the rule of life, and the expression of God's will. Cook.

7-11. From the knowledge which David had gained by an attentive study of himself, and of the world in which he lived, he turned to the study of the Law—the Bible in his hands; and he exhausts his vocabulary in describing its excellence and its salutary effects. It is pure, as incapable of improvement as is the sunbeam; it is perfect, all its parts thoroughly consistent; it is sure, an eternal Amen, dealing only with indisputable truth; it is clean, enduring forever. The purest gold, in unlimited abundance, cannot so enrich the soul. The dropping of honeycombs is not so sweet. There is safety in the admonition of the Divine precepts; there is great reward in their observance. Behrends.

The law of the Lord is perfect. Adapted to the exigencies of a lost world, it speaks on all those subjects on which no speech is heard from the heavens, and is attended with glorious efficacy. It converts the soul; it makes wise the simple; it rejoices the heart; it produces a fear of the Lord, which endures forever; and to all who have felt its sanctifying power, it is more precious than gold, and sweeter than honey. L. Beecher.—David sets open the word in its perfection, its certainties, and firmness; its righteousness, purity and truth; and then in its efficacy—that it is a converting word, an enlightening word, an instructing word, a rejoicing word, a desirable word, a warning word, and a rewarding word. O. Sedgwick.

We have here the expression of a strong personal affection for the law of God. In the first Psalm, where the character of the righteous man is portrayed in contrast with that of the wicked, it is summed up in these words: "In the law of Jehovah is his delight, and in His law doth he meditate day and night." The longest Psalm in the whole collection, the hundred and nineteenth, might be entitled "The praise of the law;" for it sets forth in ceaseless variety of application the value of the law, the statutes, the judgments of God. With affectionate tenderness the sacred poet lavishes his epithets of admiration upon this word of God. In its nature he declares it to be perfect, sure, right, pure, standing fast forever, the very truth itself, righteous altogether. These epithets mark it as reflecting the holiness of God (pure,

righteous, etc.), as being in its nature worthy of all reliance, as that which cannot be set aside or tampered with. It is no leaden rule that may be bent and twisted by the unsteady hand of human caprice to suit its own selfish purposes; but *the truth*, that we may believe it; *pure*, that it may lift us out of our sin; *standing fast forever*, that we may find in it at all times the same unerring guide. The love and affection here expressed toward the law are expressed toward it regarded simply as the reflection of the pure and perfect and holy will of God. To the spiritually minded Jew under the Old Testament, that law was not merely an outward letter of restraint; his heart and conscience consented thereto. And one capital object of the teaching of the prophets was to represent it in its truly spiritual meaning, and so to set forth as a proper object of affection to every heart which waited upon God. P.

7. The law, the testimony. These are the collective terms embracing the whole body of "statutes," "judgments," etc., afterward mentioned. This revelation has the name of "testimony;" as testifying, bearing witness of, God's character both in His good-will toward those who obey Him, and in His displeasure against transgression.

Restoring the soul. It calls it back from its wanderings by reminding it of its ingratitude, by setting before it its high destiny, by bringing it to its true Shepherd and Guardian. P.

The doctrine revealed by God he declares to be perfect, and yet David had but a very small part of the Scriptures; and if a fragment, and that the darkest and most historical portion, be perfect, what must the entire volume be! How more than perfect is the book which contains the clearest possible display of Divine love, and gives us an open vision of redeeming grace! S.

Another effect ascribed to the law is that of *making wise the simple*, not the foolish, in the strong sense in which that term is applied to the ungodly, but those imperfectly enlightened and still needing spiritual guidance, a description applicable to all believers. It is a singular fact that while this usage of the Hebrew word is peculiar to David, Solomon constantly applies it to the culpable simplicity of unconverted men. In like manner Paul describes the "sacred Scriptures" as *able to make wise unto salvation*. A.—Humble, candid, teachable minds receive the word, and are made wise unto salvation. Things hidden from the wise and prudent are revealed unto babes. The persuadable

grow wise, but the cavillers continue fools. As a law or plan the Word of God converts, and then as a testimony it instructs; it is not enough for us to be converts, we must continue to be disciples; and if we have felt the power of truth, we must go on to prove its certainty by experience. S.

8. Enlightening the eyes. The very essence of truth is plainness and brightness; the darkness and crookedness is all our own. The wisdom of God created understanding fit and proportionable to truth, the object and end of it, as the eye to the thing visible. If our understanding have a film of ignorance over it, or be blear with gazing on other false glisterings, what is that to truth? If we will but pursue with sovereign eye-salve that intellectual ray which God has planted in us, then we would believe the Scriptures protesting their own plainness and perspicuity, calling them to be instructed, not only the wise and learned, but the simple, the poor, the babes, foretelling an extraordinary effusion of God's Spirit upon every age and sex, attributing to all men, and requiring from them the ability of searching, trying, examining all things, and by the Spirit discerning that which is good; and as the Scriptures themselves pronounce their own plainness, so do the fathers testify of them. *Milton*.—When this perfect law was unfolded before the vision of the human race, it was like a sun irradiating all things by its light, and penetrating with its subtle virtue to the very thoughts of the heart. It was like a mirror, reflecting not what we are, but what we ought to be and what we might be. It was like a deeper moral consciousness, penetrating below the surface of our common thoughts and aims, and disclosing to us our inner, yea, our inmost selves. For when man comes to know the law aright, then he also knows himself aright; he sees what he ought to be—that he ought to be wholly holy in all his desires and thoughts and acts, and that, so long as he is not thus pure, he has failed of attaining the great end for which he was made. For the law is made for man's soul as much as light is made for man's eyes; and to let the light of the law in upon the soul is a revelation no less clear and distinct than to let the light of the visible sun in upon eyes that may long have had a film gathering over them. *H. B. Smith*.

9. The fear of Jehovah. Another name for the law, but as contemplated in its working on the heart. Not the religious feeling itself is here meant, but the law as intended to evoke and guide that religious feeling, and

therefore identified with it. P.—As the law was designed to teach men how to fear the Lord (Deut. 17 : 19), the phrase may here be understood as a description of the law viewed in reference to this peculiar purpose, the *fear of the Lord* being put for that which leads or teaches men to fear Him. A.—The doctrine of truth is here described by its spiritual effect—viz., inward piety, or the fear of the Lord ; this is clean in itself, and cleanses out the love of sin, sanctifying the heart in which it reigns. “ *Enduring forever.*” The grace of God in the heart being a pure principle, is also an abiding and incorruptible principle, which may be crushed for a time, but cannot be utterly destroyed. S.

10. As the preceding verses describe what the law is in itself and in its general effects, so this seems to express what it is to the Psalmist’s apprehensions and affections, thus affording a transition from the comprehensive doctrines of the foregoing context to the practical and personal appropriation of those doctrines, which now follows and concludes the Psalm. A.—“More to be desired”—strictly, loved, cherished, valued—and measured here by that which men most prize and by general consent have made the standard of value—gold. So the next figure compares the sweetness of this law of the Lord to that of honey, even when dripping fresh from the comb. Thus the love of the heart for God and His law is set forth as stronger than the strongest earthly passions of men. C.

It is more desirable than *gold*, than *fine gold*, than *much fine gold*. Gold is of the earth, earthy, but grace is the image of the heavenly. Gold is only for the body, and the concerns of time ; but grace is for the soul, and the concerns of eternity. H.—Bible truth is enriching to the soul in the highest degree ; the metaphor is one which gathers force as it is brought out ;—gold—fine gold—much fine gold ; it is good, better, best. As spiritual treasure is more noble than mere material wealth, so should it be desired and sought after with greater eagerness. “ *Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.*” Trapp says, “ Old people are all for profit, the young for pleasure ; here’s gold for the one, yea, the finest gold in great quantity : here’s honey for the other, yea, live honey dropping from the comb.” The sweetest joys, yea, the sweetest of the sweetest falls to his portion who has God’s truth to be his heritage. S.

The most learned, acute, and diligent student cannot, in the longest life, obtain an entire knowledge of this one volume. The more

deeply he works the mine, the richer and more abundant he finds the ore ; new light continually beams from this source of heavenly knowledge, to direct the conduct and illustrate the work of God and the ways of men ; and he will at last leave the world confessing that the more he studied the Scriptures, the fuller conviction he had of his *own ignorance* and of *their inestimable value*. Walter Scott.

11-14. And then the twofold contemplation rises into the loftier region of prayer. He feels that there are dark depths in his soul, gloomier pits than any into which the noontide sun shines. He speaks as one who is conscious of dormant evils which life has not yet evolved, and his prayer is more directed toward the future than the past, and is thus very unlike the tone of the later Psalms, that wail out penitence and plead for pardon. “Errors” or weaknesses—“faults” unknown to himself—“high-handed sins”—such is the climax of the evils from which he prays for deliverance. He needs not only a God who sets His glory in the heavens, nor even one whose will is made known, but one who will touch his spirit—not merely a Maker, but a pardoning God ; and his faith reaches its highest point as his song closes with the sacred name of the covenant Jehovah, repeated for the seventh time, and invoked in one final aspiration of a grateful heart, as “my Rock, and my Redeemer.” A. M.

The same God who speaks to us of His wisdom and beneficence, His might and majesty, in the glory of the sun and the stars, addresses our moral nature through His revealed Word, His law of truth and right and purity, the perfection of love. Like the sun in the Syrian sky, this law searches everything by its light and heat—the secret faults, the unconscious errors, no less than wilful and presumptuous sins. Yet the Psalmist would not shrink from this all-penetrating presence of God in His Word ; for as the light of the sun is health to the body, so this searching light of the Bible is cleansing also ; and, in the degree that the truth purifies the life, it rejoices the heart. Through and above the light that exposes and condemns, the trembling, repentant soul discerns the Lord, its strength and its Redeemer. J. P. T.

11. In keeping of them there is great reward. Those who make conscience of their duty will not only be no losers by it, but unspeakable gainers. There is a reward, not only *after* keeping, but *in* keeping God’s commandments ; a present great reward of obedience in obedience. Religion is health and honor, it is peace and pleasure ; it will make

our comforts sweet and our crosses easy, life truly valuable and death itself truly desirable. H.—“*In keeping of Thy commandments*”—and not merely *after* or *for* keeping them—“there is great reward.” Think of what will be escaped—the bitterness after the sweetness of the bread eaten in secret; the gnawings of conscience; the retributions in kind; the desolation over much of the life; and the fearful prospect. Think of what obedience brings—a quiet heart, reflecting a calm heaven, that spreads blue above it; increased susceptibility for all that is good; increased capacity for service; diminished love of evil; Peace and Power, Righteousness and Joy, all these are the linked attendants of Obedience, the leader of the chorus. A. M.

When grace is improved and exercised, gracious services are easily performed. The more our natural strength is exercised and improved, with the more ease and pleasure are all physical duties discharged; so, the more grace is acted and exercised, with the more profit and delight all Christian services are performed. Such souls find wages in their very work; they find that not only *for* keeping, but also *in keeping of His commandments there is great reward*. The joy, the rest, the refreshing, the comforts that saints now enjoy in the ways of God are so precious that they would not exchange them for ten thousand worlds. Oh, if there be so much to be had in the wilderness, what then shall be had in paradise! T. Brooks.

There is no work like God's; in the keeping of His commands there is reward. Sin brings shame and sorrow, but gracious actions leave a savor of sweetness, and diffuse a joy throughout the soul. Conscience of duty gives the purest contentment to the mind. Sinful satisfactions are bought with clamor of conscience, and then they are bought very dear. What a great reward may we expect, since we have so much joy and peace in the expectation of it! How great must be the joys of heaven when the very interest in them casts such a lightsome brightness upon the soul! If the mere *taste* be such, what is the fulness? If the morning glances and forerunning beams be so glorious, what will the high noon be? If there be *songs* in your *pilgrimage*, you will have *hallelujahs* in your *country*! Manton.

12, 13. But with all this affection for God's Word, there is mingled awe and reverence. That Word lays a man bare to himself. It judges him; it shows him what is in him, convinces him how much there is that needs to be purged, how far even one who loves it is from

a perfect obedience. It is at once a copy of the will of God, and a mirror of the heart of man. Hence it calls forth the penitent confession, “As for errors, who can understand them?” and the prayer both to be absolved—“*pronounce me free*” (like the New Testament *δικαιοῦν*)—and to be kept from sin; first for pardon, and then for sanctification. P.

After this survey of the works and word of God, he comes at last to peruse the third book, his *conscience*. And what finds he here? A blurred copy that he is puzzled how to read; “*who*,” says he, “*can understand his errors?*” Those notions which God had with His own hand imprinted upon conscience in legible characters are partly defaced and slurred with interlinings of “*secret faults*,” partly obliterated and quite razed out with “*presumptuous sins*.” And yet this *manuscript* cannot be so abused but it will still give in evidence for God; there being no argument in the world that can with more force extort an acknowledgment of God from any man's conscience than the conviction of guilt itself labors under. For the sinner cannot but know he has transgressed a law, and he finds within him, if he is not past all sense, apprehensions that “for all these things God will bring him into judgment.” The *conscience* being thus convicted of sin, where there is any sense of true piety the soul will, with David, address itself to God for pardon, that it may be “*cleansed from secret faults*,” and for grace, that by its restraints, and preventions, and assistances, it may be “*kept back from presumptuous sins*,” and if unhappily engaged, that it may be freed at least from the “*dominion*” of them. A. Littleton.

Face to face with the greatness of God, in power, wisdom, holiness and love, the Psalmist is startled by his own ignorance and moral imperfection. He dares not trust his own judgment. The approval of conscience is good, but he does not rest in that. God is the only infallible judge, and therefore he is anxious that God shall pronounce him innocent. Strength of will is good, nay, indispensable, in resisting temptation, but that does not make him invulnerable and infallibly secure; and therefore he asks God to keep him. These are the three things in his earnest prayer: His inmost heart is set upon being holy in God's sight. He pleads for the Divine forgiveness and he implores the continued almighty protection of God. He holds fast to God, and asks Him never to permit him to wander from His side. So intent is he on having the Divine approval that he wants not only his spoken words, but the

murmur of his heart to be acceptable to God, whom he addresses as his Rock, unmoved and immovable, and as his Redeemer, his God, his Kinsman and Defender, who is pledged to maintain his cause against all enemies. It is a great thing to have God's approval of our conduct. It is a greater thing to have God's approval of all we say, kept from all hastiness and bitterness of speech. But the greatest thing is to have a heart that never vibrates to a false note, whose lowest murmur makes the face of God smile with loving approval. Ah! that prayer cuts deep. It leaves no room for self-complacency. But the peace that endures forever, and the joy that is unspeakable and unclouded come only with a purity in which the murmur of the heart answers the holiness of God. That is the redemption we need; none other can satisfy us; and the promise of God in Jesus Christ pledges its ultimate and eternal possession to every penitent and trusting heart. *Behrends.*

12. *Errors who shall understand? Clear Thou me from hidden ones!* The word translated *errors* is akin to one sometimes used in the Law to denote sins of inadvertence, error, or infirmity, as distinguished from deliberate, wilful, and high-handed sins, such as are deprecated in the next verse. Against such sins no wisdom or vigilance can wholly guard. The word translated *clear* is also borrowed from the Law, and means not so much to cleanse by renovation of the heart as to acquit by a judicial sentence. (See Num. 14: 18.) Such an acquittal, in the case of sinners against God, involves the idea of a free forgiveness. A.—*Errors*, sins both of ignorance and infirmity, those which are done unintentionally and unconsciously; “For we are entangled in so many nets and snares of Satan, that none of us can perceive the hundredth part of the evils that cleave to him.” *Calvin.*

Secret (faults); lit. things hidden, *i.e.*, not only from others, but from our own hearts, through inobservance, through a too ready forgetfulness of them when observed, through the habit of self-deception, or even through their being wilfully cherished. P.—Few, indeed, are the hearts that would bear the revolution of its workings for a single day without exciting a blush; and few are the inhabitants of this world who would be willing that their secret views and thoughts and plans, for any considerable period of their lives, should be laid open before their best friends. *Barnes.*

Hidden sins may be sins of conscience. How many “secret faults” then we may be cherishing under the protecting mantle of conscience

itself! How many little graces in ourselves we may be admiring, which, after all, are but vices in saintly apparel! Or they *may be sins of ignorance.* What a multitude of such sins hide in the nooks and crannies of the human heart! Even the wisest of us—those best skilled in the Christian morality—are perpetually stumbling through ignorance. Again, *unconscious sins may be sins of inadvertence.* Who does not every day and every hour commit sins of thoughtlessness;—sins of sudden impulse; sins of drifting revery; sins of uncontrolled memory; sins of an unsentinelled, careless ear; sins of an unguarded, unleashed tongue; sins of unconscious, wild abandonment in the turmoil and shocks of life's battle, even as the drumbeat is unheard in the booming of the cannonade? These sins of inadvertence, how they throng and litter life's pilgrimage, as countless as the autumn leaves on the highway, and as unnoticed! Again, *unconscious sins may be sins of omission.* Sins of omission are the most positive of sins. For man owes to his Maker the unintermittent and perfect obedience of his lifetime; so that one single sin of omission is a debt which he can never find time or means to pay; and therefore the Lord teaches us to pray, “Forgive us our debts.” In fact, the parent sin—the sin of sins, that root sin of which it is one of the offices of the Holy Spirit to convict the world—is a sin of omission: “Of sin, because they believe not on Me.” Alas! most persons are troubled only with those sins which are called sins of commission—outward, manifest sins. They forget that by far the larger proportion of our sins in God's sight are sins of simple neglect. *Boardman.*

We have every one of us besetting sins, not one, but many; sins, that is, which more easily get advantage over us than others to which we have a mournful proclivity, an especial predisposition; it may be through natural temperament, it may be through faults in our education, it may be through the circumstances in which we are placed, it may be through having given way to them in times past, and thus broken down on their side more than on any other the moral defences of our soul. It is, then, a point of obvious prudence to strengthen the defences of the city of the soul there, where they are felt and known to be weakest—where, that is, every one who has kept any close record of the sad secrets of his own spiritual life will in his own case abundantly know—to watch and pray against all sin, but, above all, with especial emphasis and earnestness against the sin which most easily besets us. *Trench.*

Fine grains of sand will bury travellers in the desert. Fine flakes of snow, so light that they seem to hang in the air and scarce to fall, will, if they gather over the sleepy wayfarer, extinguish life; if they drift, they will bury whole houses and their dwellers. Fine, delicate sins, as people think them, will chill the soul and take away its life. *Pusey*.—The worst sin is not some outburst of gross transgression, forming an exception to the ordinary tenor of a life, bad and dismal as such a sin is; but the worst and most fatal are the small continuous vices which root underground and honeycomb the soul. Many a man who thinks himself a Christian is in more danger from the daily commission, for example, of small pieces of sharp practice in his business, than ever was David at his worst. White ants pick a carcass clean sooner than a lion will. *A. M.*

The force of habit makes sins once known become secret sins. To the force of habit must be added that of custom. The most religious men, unless they are specially watchful, will feel the sway of the fashion of their age, and suffer from it, as Lot in wicked Sodom, though unconsciously. Our chief guide amid the evil and seducing customs of the world is obviously the Bible. "The world passeth away; but the Word of the Lord endureth forever." How much extended then, and strengthened, necessarily must be this secret dominion of sin over us when we consider how little we read Scripture! To think of these things, and to be alarmed, is the first step toward acceptable obedience; to be at ease is to be unsafe. We must know what the evil of sin is hereafter if we do not learn it here. *Newman*.

Take heed of secret sins. They will undo thee if loved and maintained: one moth may spoil the garment; one leak drown the ship; a penknife stab and kill a man as well as a sword; so one sin may damn the soul; nay, there is more danger of a secret sin causing the miscarrying of the soul than open profaneness, because not so obvious to the reproofs of the world; therefore take heed that secret sinnings eat not out good beginnings. *Burroughs*.—If secret faults are indulged, they will sooner or later break out like smothered fires, and the true character of the heart will be developed. They cannot always be concealed, and God designs that they shall not always be. It is well, under the Divine administration, that the true state of the heart should be made manifest, and that it should be seen what man is. Accordingly, few things are more common than such sudden developments of character, and out-

breakings of the secret faults of the soul. We are often shocked by such cases, and our philosophy about man seems to fail, and we are at a loss to account for the instances of sudden depravity that appall the community. But these painful disclosures are not departures from the great principles of human nature. There is a maxim in law that no one suddenly becomes eminently vile. These melancholy lapses into sin are but *exponents* of the real character of the man; the regular results of a long course of guilt; the regular outbreaks of secret faults—like the breaking out of the volcano, or like the tumbling down of a bowing wall, or the fall of a house that has been long undermined by secret streams. *Barnes*.

13. Presumptuous sins are those done with a high hand. Against these he prays that they may not get the full mastery over him. This completes the climax, which begins with involuntary and advances to hidden, presumptuous, and at length ruling sins, which leave a man their hopeless slave. *P.*—The sin becomes presumptuous when it is the fruit of deliberation and contrivance; when the person ruminates and plots, and lays schemes for executing his criminal designs. The presumption is farther heightened when obstinacy is added to knowledge and deliberation; when the transgressor "holdeth fast his iniquity, and will not let it go," but rusheth forward in his wicked course, "even as the horse rusheth into battle." *R. Walker*.

As sins of presumption are more difficultly cured, so they waste the conscience infinitely more than any other sins. As really as blows and wounds weaken the body and by degrees dispose it to its final dissolution, so certainly do some sins shake and batter and tear down the constitution of the soul. Guilt upon the conscience, like rust upon iron, both defiles and consumes it, by degrees gnawing and creeping into it, as that does, till at length it has eaten out the very substance of the metal. The inward as well as the outward man has his proper health, strength, and soundness naturally belonging to him; and in proportion has also his diseases and distempers, arising from an irregular course of living. And every act of presumption is to him as a spiritual debauch or surfeit, things that bring a present disorder, and entail a future decay upon nature. This kind of sin is marvellously apt to grow and prevail upon him that gives way to it. Every presumption is properly an encroachment, and all encroachment carries in it still a farther and a farther invasion upon the persons encroached

upon. It enters into the soul as a gangrene does into the body, which spreads as well as infects, and, with a running progress, carries a venom and a contagion over all the members. Presumption never stops in its first attempt. He that wades so far as to wet himself, cares not how much he trashes farther. When the tenderness of the soul is lost, and its first awe of God and religion broke by a bold sin, it grows venturous, and ready to throw itself upon all sorts of outrages and enormities. It steps undauntedly into that stream that is like to carry away and swallow it up forever. *South.*

There is that in every one of us which is always ready to take the part of sin, to plead for sin, to be upon sin's side, sin having a natural correspondence and affinity with everything which is corrupt and fallen within us. There is our love of ease ; our love of pleasure ; our pride. All the pride as well as all the passions of man are enlisted on the side of sin. How shall we deliver ourselves from these sorceries of sin ? How shall we understand our errors, or at least understand that we can never understand them to the full, and thus seek of God that He would cleanse us from them ? Grasp with a full and firm faith the blessed truth of the one sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction made for your sins. Remember that He who made that atonement for your sins, and so enabled you to look them in the face—for they are sins not imputed any more—is also the Giver of the Spirit, of that Spirit which convinces us of sin, of righteousness, of judgment to come. Ask of God, and ask earnestly, and ask continually, for this convincing Spirit. *Trench.*—When sin is dethroned in the heart, the most secret faults bow it in humility before the Lamb. To His precious blood the believer has recourse for cleansing ; he finds daily need of it. He cannot understand all his errors. Many secret faults cleave unto him. He is sensible that even these must be washed away, lest they defile his conscience and spread a cloud over his mind. It is the peculiar wisdom of disciples not only to observe the bud, blossom, and fruit of sin ; but also to consider the evil root, the polluted nature from which it springs. Here is the exercise of watchfulness. This calls for their daily prayer to be kept by the power of God. *W. Mason.*

14. Finally the singer prays for a gracious acceptance of his prayer, in which mouth and heart accord, he himself being upheld by the rock-like faithfulness and redeeming love of his God. *D.*—The prayer or expectation of acceptance derives peculiar beauty from the obvi-

ous allusion to the frequent use of the same Hebrew phrase in the law of Moses, to denote the acceptance of the sacrificial offerings, or rather the acceptance of the offerer on account of them. This allusion also serves to suggest the idea, not conveyed by a translation, of atonement, expiation, as the ground of the acceptance which the Psalmist hopes or prays for. *A.*

The meditation of my heart. As meditation is the best preparative for prayer, so prayer is the best issue of meditation. Meditation and prayer should go together. It is when we thus consider our prayers, and then only, that we may expect that God will consider them, and take that to His heart which comes from ours. *H.*

The name of Jehovah is repeated for the seventh time. The epithets “my Rock,” “my Redeemer,” have here a peculiar force. For He is my strength in keeping the law ; my Redeemer as delivering me from the guilt and the power of sin. *P.*—Our near Kinsman's name, our Goel or Redeemer, makes a blessed ending to the Psalm ; it began with the heavens, but it ends with Him whose glory fills heaven and earth. *S.*

From two books I collect my divinity ; besides that written one of God, another of His servant nature, that universal and public manuscript that lies expanded unto the eyes of all. Nor do I so forget God as to adore the name of nature ; which I define not with the schools, the principle of motion and rest, but that straight and regular line, that settled and constant course the wisdom of God hath ordained the actions of His creatures, according to their several kinds. To make a revolution every day is the nature of the sun, because of that necessary course which God hath ordained it, from which it cannot swerve but by a faculty from that voice which first gave it motion. Now this course of nature God seldom alters or perverts, but like an excellent artist hath so contrived His work that with the self-same instrument, without a new creation, He may effect His obscurest designs. I call the effects of nature the works of God, whose hand and instrument she only is ; and therefore to ascribe His actions unto her is to devolve the honor of the principal agent upon the instrument ; which if with reason we may do, then let our hammers rise up and boast they have built our houses, and our pens receive the honor of our writing. . . . Now nature is not at variance with art nor art with nature, they being both the ser-

vants of His providence ; art is the perfection of nature ; were the world now as it was in the sixth day, there were yet a chaos ; nature hath made one world and art another. In brief, all things are artificial, for nature is the art of God. *Browne.*

There are but two books wherein we can read God : the one is His Word, His works the other ; this is the bigger volume, that the more exquisite. The characters of this are more large, but dim ; of that, smaller, but clearer. Philosophers have turned over this and erred ; that, divines and studious Christians, not without full and certain information. In the works of God we see the shadow or footsteps of the Creator ; in His Word we see the face of God in a glass. Happiness consists in the vision of that infinite Majesty ; and if we be perfectly happy above in seeing Him face to face, our happiness is well forward below, in seeing the lively representation of His face in the glass of the Scriptures. We cannot spend our eyes too much upon this object ; for me, the more I see the more I am amazed, the more I am ravished, with this glorious beauty. *Bishop H.*

Two things fill the soul with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and the more steadily one holds them in contemplation : the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me. I need not search for or imagine either of them, as if they were held in darkness, or were in a transcendental sphere, beyond the circle of my sight. I see them before me, and associate them immediately with the consciousness of my existence. The first acts upon me from the place which I occupy in the exterior world of the senses, and extends the connection in which I stand into immeasurable vastness, with worlds upon worlds, and systems of systems, even moreover into the boundless times of their periodic motion, its commencement and its duration. The second begins its action with my invisible self, my own personality, and stations me in a world which has true infinitude, but which is only to be traced by the intellect, and with which—as thereby also at the same time with all yonder visible worlds—I recognize myself as in a connection not merely accidental, but universal and necessary. *Kant.*

It is not for the refutation of objectors merely, and for the conviction of doubters, that it is worth while to study the two volumes—that of nature and that of revelation—which Providence has opened before us, but because it is both profitable and gratifying to a well-constituted mind to trace in each of them the evident

handwriting of Him, the Divine author of both. *Whately.*—The works of nature and the works of revelation display religion to mankind in characters so large and visible, that those who are not quite blind may in them see and read the first principles and most necessary parts of it, and from thence penetrate into those infinite depths filled with the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. *Locke.*—The books of nature and of Revelation equally elevate our conceptions and invite our piety ; they mutually illustrate each other ; they have an equal claim on our regard ; for they are both written by the finger of one eternal, incomprehensible God. *R. Watson.*—No man with God's exhaustless Scriptures in His hands, and with the rich book of nature and providence open in its pictured radiance before his eyes, needs to have either a dwindling or an impoverished soul. *W. R. Williams.*

The laws of nature are discoveries ; the laws of the spiritual world are revelations. The former are found out ; the latter are given. The former are confessedly imperfect, added to continually as years go by ; the latter are complete, the same yesterday, to day, and forever. The former claim no finality. They may be challenged, put upon their trial, called upon to justify themselves ; the latter, if they are from God, claim our reverence, our obedience, our willing submission. Nor does it affect this difference, that revelation is verified in the pure heart and will, finding an echo within our best self. Revelation does not claim to reverse our natural hopes and aspirations and longings, but to lift them into a higher region, and to seal them with a supernatural authority. To ignore that authority is to forget the essential element in a revelation. Knowledge, real knowledge, which is the correlative of truth and the means of freedom, belongs both to the revelations of the Spirit and the discoveries of the interpreters of nature ; but the motto of science is, *Doubt*, till you have proved, while the motto of revealed truth is always, *Believe*, in order that you may know. *A. L. Moore.*

With the natural sciences, on the one hand, appealing so largely to our reason, and the Scriptures, on the other hand, appealing so constantly to our faith, our duty is to depreciate neither, but to welcome both the sciences and the Scriptures, to ascertain their harmony, to note their differences, and to accept the treasures of truth which they may bring. Indifference is inexcusable as is excessive zeal, and apathy as antagonism. The Bible, free to us as are the fields of science, challenges the severest

scrutiny. It is the boldest of books, and demands the application of every test. As it is the most comprehensive history in the world, and gives the amplest scope for research, as its earliest records are the oldest in existence, and its latest prophecies shed light far into the future, as it touches depths and reaches heights which no other book can approach, as it brings into closest connection the visible and invisible, natural law and supernatural influence, the condition of man and the character of God, it is exposed to assaults which no other book can bear. *W. Fraser.*

We have always regretted that endeavors should have been made to depreciate nature with a view of exalting revelation; it has always appeared to us to be nothing else than the degrading of one part of God's works in the hope thereby of exalting and recommending another. Science and religion have too many common foes in ignorance and prejudice, in passion and vice under all their forms, to admit of their lawfully wasting their strength in a useless warfare with each other. Science has a foundation, and so has religion; let them unite their foundations, and the basis will be broader, and they will be two compartments of one great fabric reared to the glory of God. Let the one be the outer and the other the inner court. In the one, let all look and admire and adore; and in the other, let those who have faith kneel, and pray, and praise. Let the one be the sanctuary where human learning may present its richest incense as an offering to God, and the other the holiest of all, separated from it by a veil now rent in twain, and in which, on a blood-sprinkled mercy seat, we pour out the love of a reconciled heart, and hear the oracles of the living God. *McCosh.*

The grand old book of God still stands; and this old earth, the more its leaves are turned over and pondered, the more it will sustain and illustrate the sacred Word. *Dana.*—Does a man ask what this world is, and why man is placed in it? It was that the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world might be clearly seen. Have we ever stood beneath the solemn vault of heaven when the stars were looking down in their silent splendor, and not felt an overpowering sense of His eternity? When the white lightning has quivered in the sky, has that told us nothing of power, or only something of electricity? Rocks and mountains, are they here to give us the idea of material massiveness, or to reveal the conception of the Strength of Israel? When we take up the page of past history, and read that wrong never

prospered long, but that nations have drunk one after another the cup of terrible retribution, can we dismiss all that as the philosophy of history, or shall we say that through blood, and war, and desolation we trace the footsteps of a presiding God, and find evidence that there sits at the helm of this world's affairs a strict, and rigorous, and most terrible justice? To the eye that can see, to the heart that is not paralyzed, God is here. The warnings which the Bible utters against the things of this world bring no charge against the glorious world itself. The world is the glass through which we see the Maker. *F. W. R.*

That nature in its obvious sense and literal interpretation declares the being and attributes of the Almighty Father, none but *the fool in heart* has ever dared gainsay. But it has been the music of gentle and pious minds in all ages, it is the poetry of all human nature, to read it likewise in a figurative sense, and to find therein correspondencies and symbols of the spiritual world. *Coleridge.*

Habits of meditation on the depths of our own being, and the attributes of God to whom we are related, are requisite for those who would read aright the lines and lessons of creation. There may be worshippers of nature who are not worshippers of God; but there is no true natural religion without a devout heart toward God, a heart renewed by grace. Nor are the influences of nature such as can ever supply the work of grace, or approximate to it. The eye and ear must be quickened and guided by that inward love, that heavenly sympathy in the soul, which is the secret of true and living knowledge, and then "the heavens and the earth shall declare, not only the power of their Maker, but the glory and the presence of their God, even as He appeared to the great prophet during the vision of the mount, in the skirts of His divinity." When viewed through a heart filled with the inspiration of love to God and in communion with Him, nature becomes not less beautiful, but God is more clearly seen. The intellectual and poetical atmosphere is not disesteemed or neglected, but is not dwelt in exclusively or alone; the element of spiritual devotion, of prayer, praise, and heavenly love, mingles with it, diffuses a warmer glow and sweeter tints, through which the lines of the works of God disclose something of the Divine face of their Author, and produce not only a deeper power of joy and a harmony of soul, in which we seem to see into the life of things, but a still more blessed mood, as on the verge of the unseen and eternal, participating of *the*

earnest of the Spirit, and approximating to the life of heaven. *Cheever.*

There is religion in everything around us, a calm and holy religion in the unbreathing things of nature, which man would do well to imitate. It is a meek and blessed influence, stealing in unawares upon the heart ; it comes quickly and without excitement ; it has no terror, no gloom in its approaches ; it does not rouse up the passions ; it is fresh from the hands of its Author, glowing from the immediate presence of the Great Spirit which pervades and quickens it ; it is written on the arched sky, it looks out from every star ; it is on the sailing cloud and in the invisible wind ; it is among the hills and valleys of the earth where the shrubless mountain-top pierces the thin atmosphere of eternal winter, or where the mighty forest fluctuates before the strong wind, with its dark waves of green foliage ; it is spread out, like a legible language, upon the broad face of the unsleeping ocean ; it is this which breaks, link after link, the chain that binds us to materiality, and which opens to our imagination a world of spiritual beauty and holiness. *Ruskin.*

The beauty which some would cleave into a religion is no religion in itself, but it speaks of a God who has impressed on nature, as far as was possible, shadows of His attributes. It speaks of His perfection, of His glory, of His worthiness to absorb us and fill us with a passion of love. To rest in beauty, without tracing it to its source, is to miss much of the teaching it was intended to convey. It is to stop short where God intended us to reach forward. It is to forget that though the sublimity and beauty of nature may please the imagination, and even refine and exalt it, they cannot in themselves affect the soul or change the heart. It is only when we "look through nature up to nature's God" that we reach the real teachings of nature, and hear her true voice. *G. R.*
—In the blue heavens above, in the smiling earth beneath, and in the social world around, you will find full scope for the exercise of your noblest faculties, and a field ample enough for the widest range of invention and discovery. Science has never derived any truth, nor art any invention, nor religion any bulwark, nor humanity any boon from those presumptuous mystics who grovel amid nature's subverted laws, burrowing in the caverns of the invisible world, and attempting to storm the awful and impregnable sanctuary of the future. If these views be sound, the instruction of literary and theological students, and, indeed, of the whole population, in the grand truths of the material

world, becomes the duty of a Christian Church and a Christian state. *D. Brewster.*

The Bible not merely contains the Word of God, it *is* the Word of God. It does not give us some grains of Divine truth, some messages really sent by God to man, amid a great mass of statements proceeding from man's own wit and fancy ; it is—all—God's truth and God's Word. It is the flower and crown of all God's revelation to man ; everything that we can read, or fancy we read, on the pages of nature or providence, we find far more plainly stated in the Bible ; and we find a vast deal more. We find there things most needful unto salvation, about which earth and sea and stars are dumb. We find the message of salvation through a crucified Redeemer ; we find how we may get the pardon of sin ; we are told of that kindly blessed Spirit, of whom is everything pure, and true, and good, and kind, that can be found in human being ! Sweep the heavens and scan the earth ; but what word will you find of such saving, cheering, priceless truths as these ! *Boyd.*

The voice of the new revelation in grace agrees with the voice of the old in nature. The absolute unity of plan which strict research is daily proving more and more—a unity now known to reach as far as the planets in their spheres—attests that the Creator is one. All Scripture proceeds on the unity of God. Throughout all nature we find a will at work whose method is to bind itself by orderly method and fixed law. Now the revelation of the Divine will in Scripture is likewise the revelation of a law, and its chief end is the reduction of moral anarchy to moral order. Again, we are daily learning how patiently, and through what long, slow, even laborious processes God has been pleased to build up His physical universe. This is God's way in nature, and it has been His way in grace. Once more, the God of nature avenges the transgression of every physical law by a sentient creature. Scripture discovers precisely the same features in the moral and spiritual rule of God. Of law, of transgression, of penalty and reward, of life and death, nature has no more to say than the Bible has. But of another law higher than that of penalty—of the spiritual law of self-sacrifice, of redemption of life by life, and giving up of the just for the unjust, and forgiveness of sin, and the regeneration of the lapsed—the physical universe is wholly, or all but wholly, silent. *Dykes.*

Of the Bible, the author is God, not man ; the inditer, the Holy Spirit, not the wit of the apostles or prophets ; the penmen, such as were sanctified from the womb and endued with a principal portion of God's Spirit ; the matter, verity, piety, purity, uprightness ; the form, God's Word, God's testimony, God's oracles, the word of truth, the word of salvation, etc. ; the effects, light of understanding, stableness of persuasion, repentance from dead works, newness of life, holiness, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost ; lastly, the end and reward of the study thereof, fellowship with the saints, participation of the heavenly nature, fruition of an inheritance, immortal, undefiled, and that shall never fade away. Happy is the man that delighteth in the Scripture, and thrice happy that meditateth in it day and night. *Translators of the English Version.*—I see in the Bible my heart and the world painted to the life ; and I see just that provision made, which is competent to the highest ends and effects on this heart and this world. *R. Cecil.*

Until we have reached the point where we can accept the Scriptures as the infallible rule of our faith and practice we are like wrecked mariners clinging to a spar and drifting on a boundless sea. The man who has not sound views of inspiration is absolutely at sea with reference to all religious truth. It is a God-breathed book ; as it is said, " Holy men wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." It must therefore be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. It is not enough to say, this book contains the Word of God ; it is the Word of God. On a winter's day I breathe upon a window pane, and my breath congeals there into a landscape of beauty ; so God, through the inspired writers, has breathed His breath into the Scriptures and left a perfect outline of spiritual truth. It is perfect and complete ; ending with " finis," and allowing neither errata nor addenda. It was adjusted in the beginning to all the progress of the ages. All other books are subject to amendment. There is not now a text-book in use in our public schools that was used fifty years ago. There must be successive editions, " corrected and enlarged." But the question in respect to the Bible is how to get back to the first edition ; what we want is the precise original, the breath of God. *Burrell.*—God has spoken, after His own method, once for all, and He will speak no more. Revelation is complete, and it is ended—the Book is closed and sealed ! Still and silent are the heavens now forevermore. If men would know the mind of God, they must

consult His revealed Word. Whether they will remain holy or unholy, righteous or filthy, depends upon the mode in which they are affected toward that one, finished, all-sufficient revelation, which God has given to the world. Men may ask for a sign, and no sign shall be given to them, beyond what they have already. They wish that God would speak to them, though it were but a word ; and the *silence* of the heavens assures them most impressively that all knowledge and all salvation are in that one system of redemption which is disclosed in the inspired volume. *W. Adams.*

It is a great privilege to ascend some of earth's mountain tops, and gaze on the outspread bosom of the earth, till the finite seems to be almost lost in the infinite. For these faint reflections from God's face one cannot be too grateful. It is a high privilege to look through the astronomer's glass. One would think that the heart would overflow with emotion, and words of gratitude would constantly tremble on the lips, as one leaf after another of that sublime theology is unrolled before us. Greater still, if possible, is the privilege of gazing at the other extreme of God's works ; of beholding, through the medium of science, the wonders on wonders, which a small worm, a dry leaf, a little flintstone, a minute coral of the ocean, reveal. How can one hesitate, living in such mysteries, to bow down in grateful praise and lowly adoration ! But what are all these in comparison with the truths of redemption, with the grace of the Redeemer, the love of the Holy Spirit, the mystery of godliness, the themes in which we have the angels for fellow-students, our Lord as the omniscient instructor, our own endless well-being as both the immediate and the ultimate aim ! Common thankfulness, it should seem, would lead us never to tire in plucking these medicinal leaves, these immortal fruits, which grow for our especial benefit. By remembering what God has done for us, we should be impelled to make the utmost practical use of all those regenerating truths which lie within our possible grasp. Or rather, we should need no external inducement, no pressing invitation, no suggestion of conscience or of gratitude. We could not stay away from this royal table. We should throng around these wells of living water. So ennobling is Divine truth, so healing to the broken spirit, so precisely does it meet the craving wants of a corrupt nature, so fully does it respond to the yearnings of the immortal spirit, so efficacious is it in all the ex-

igencies of our being, in life and in death, that we should feel a kind of insatiable covetousness till we have sounded its depths, and climbed its heights, and made trial of its last possible powers of help and restoration, and given to our Redeemer that tribute of love, of honor, of thankfulness, as great and as trustful as the limits of a finite capacity will permit. B. B. E.

PSALM XX.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN. A PSALM OF DAVID.

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|---|--|
| <p>1 THE LORD answer thee in the day of trouble ;
The name of the God of Jacob set thee up on
high ;</p> <p>2 Send thee help from the sanctuary,
And strengthen thee out of Zion ;</p> <p>3 Remember all thy offerings,
And accept thy burnt sacrifice ; [Selah</p> <p>4 Grant thee thy heart's desire,
And fulfil all thy counsel.</p> <p>5 We will triumph in thy salvation,
And in the name of our God we will set up
our banners :
The LORD fulfil all thy petitions.</p> | <p>6 Now know I that the LORD saveth his
anointed ;
He will answer him from his holy heaven
With the saving strength of his right hand.</p> <p>7 Some <i>trust</i> in chariots, and some in horses
But we will make mention of the name of the
LORD our God.</p> <p>8 They are bowed down and fallen :
But we are risen, and stand upright.</p> <p>9 Save, LORD :
Let the King answer us when we call.</p> |
|---|--|

A PRAYER for the use of the ancient Church in time of war. Addressing her visible head, she wishes him Divine assistance and success (vs. 1-5), and expresses a strong confidence that God will answer her petition (vs. 6-8), which she then repeats and sums up in conclusion (v. 9). There is no trace of this Psalm having been composed with reference to any particular occasion, its contents being perfectly appropriate to every case in which the chosen people, under their theocratic head, engaged in war against the enemies of God and Israel. A.

This Psalm was composed for the emergency of a pending war, of which the indications are "the day of trouble" (v. 1); prayer for help in battle is the strain of the whole Psalm; the offering of special sacrifices preliminary to the going forth to war (v. 3); the setting up of military banners in the name of their God (v. 5); the fact that their enemies gloried in chariots and in horses, God's people in His name alone (v. 7); and that in this conflict their enemies fell and they rose in strength and victory (v. 8). C.

1-5. Intercession for the king who is in distress, and who causes sacrifices to be offered for himself in the sanctuary. D.—The army, ready drawn up for action, as we may fancy, prays for the king, who, according to custom, brings sacrifices and offerings before the fight.

"Jehovah hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee, send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion, remember all thine offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice." Then, as they wave their standards in the sunshine, or plant before the ranks of each tribe its cognizance, to be defended to the death, the hoarse shout rises from the files, "In the name of our God we will set up, or wave, our banners." A. M.

1. "The name of the God of Jacob," in the second clause, is used instead of the word "Lord" (Jehovah), or simply, "God of Jacob," to express the fact that the petitions offered, and the promises implied in them, are founded upon the actual known character of God and His revealed relation to His people. This is made clear by the declaration of the ground of confidence which follows the petitions. "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the *name* of the Lord our God;"—that is, we will call to mind what God is in Himself, and has made known about Himself to us, and has promised to do for us. W. F. Wilkinson.

The name of the God of Jacob defend thee. Here is an assurance of protection and safety in the midst of foes, and of perseverance to the end. Get encircled with covenant engagements and covenant blood, cove-

nant promises and covenant securities ; then will “the Lord hear you in the time of trouble, and the name of the God of Jacob will defend you.” *J. Irons.*—A sweeter wish, or a more consolatory prayer for a child of sorrow, was never uttered by man. And who is there of the sons of men to whom a “day of trouble” does not come, whose path is not darkened at times, or with whom is it unclouded sunshine from the cradle to the grave ? “Few plants,” says old Jacomb, “have both the morning and the evening sun ;” and one far older than he said, “Man is born to trouble.” A “day of trouble,” then, is the heritage of every child of Adam. How sweet the wish, “*The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble*” ! It is the prayer of another in behalf of some troubled one, and yet it implies that the troubled one himself had also prayed, “*The Lord hear thee*”—hear and answer thine own prayer ! *Bouchier.*

2. Send thee help from the sanctuary. Why “*from the sanctuary*,” but because the Lord presented Himself there as upon the mercy-seat ! The sanctuary was in Zion, the mercy-seat was in the sanctuary, the Lord was in the mercy-seat ; He would have Himself set forth as residing there. Herein they pray, and pray in faith, for help and strength. *Clarkson.*—Mercies out of the sanctuary are the sweetest mercies, such as are the tokens of God’s peculiar love ; the blessing of God, even our own God. Strength out of Zion is spiritual strength, strength in the soul, in the inward man, and that is it we should most desire, both for ourselves and others, in services and sufferings.

3. “The Lord give thee the victory and success which thou didst by prayer with sacrifices ask of Him.” By this we may now know that God accepts our spiritual sacrifices, if by His spirit He kindles in our souls a holy fire of pious and Divine affection, and with that makes our hearts burn within us. *H.*—Very excellent are Luther’s remarks here, and capable of wide application. After observing that the sacrifices of the old law are done away in Christ, he continues, “Notwithstanding, at the present day others, as well as David, may use this Psalm in prayer ; for as the person, the circumstances, the time, and place are all different in the new law, so likewise is the sacrifice ; but one faith and one spirit abide through all ages, and amid all diversities of places, works, persons. The external varies ; the internal remains ever the same.”

4. Fulfil all thy counsel. All thy plans and measures in the war. *P.*—Those

who make it their business to glorify God may expect that God will, one way or other, gratify them ; and they who walk in His counsel may promise themselves that He will fulfil theirs. *Thou shalt devise a thing, and it shall be established unto thee.* *H.*

5. In the name of our God we will set up our banners. We will wage war in His name, we will see that our cause be good, and make His glory our end in every expedition ; we will ask counsel at His mouth, and take Him along with us ; we will follow His conduct, implore His aid, depend upon it, and refer the issue to Him. We will celebrate our victories in His name. When “*we lift up our banners*” in triumph, and set up our trophies, it shall be “*in the name of our God.*” He shall have all the glory of our success, and no instrument shall have any part of the honor that is due to Him. *H.*—Confession of Christ, as the only name whereby we can be saved, is the “*banner*” which distinguishes His faithful people. Oh, that this confession were more distinct, more pure, more zealous, in those who seem to be His followers, then would they be more united, more bold, in the profession of their religion, more successful in the cause of Christ, terrible as an army with “*banners*” ! *W. Wilson.*

The union of patriotic devotion and of religious fervor is not an incidental and occasional feature in the records of the Bible. It colors all the history and emerges in all its literature. Every one of the prophets, from Moses down to Malachi, through a period of fifteen hundred years, was both a preacher of righteousness and a patriot. They were as ardent lovers of country as they were lovers of God ; and were always found at the front in times of national danger and despondency. When twelve hundred years ago and more the sword of Mahomet swept over the East and invaded Europe, patriotism became intensely religious, and for nearly one thousand years afterward prayers were earnestly offered in all the churches of Christendom for protection from the Turk. When Holland stood resolute against Charles V. and Philip II. ; when Germany bore the brunt of the Thirty Years’ War, the cause of patriotism was the cause of religion. Had there been no Cromwell there had been no free England ; had there been no William the Silent, there had been no Leyden, giving refuge to the Pilgrims, and this Republic would never have been born. Patriotism has an ethical and spiritual root ; it is devotion to a moral ideal. The state is no man’s creation, however great he may be ; nor is it a

mere compact between many men ; it is the voluntary subjection of the many to the sovereignty of law, to the maintenance of order, to the supremacy of righteousness. And intelligent, ardent, habitual regard for law means reverence and love for God. Thus patriotism and religion coalesce ; a true love of country issues from and merges in true love for God ; and true love for God involves true love for all men. In this spirit we may set up and wave our banners in the name of God. Thus we may put our religion into our patriotism. *Behrends.*

6-8. While vs. 1-5 were being sung, it is probable that the offering of the sacrifice was going on. Now, after a considerable pause, one voice is raised, very likely the voice of a Levite, and gives expression to the confidence that flashes up in their minds, that the sacrifice which has been offered by the priest has been graciously accepted. D.

6. The hope suddenly changes into certainty, *now know I* that Jehovah *hath* saved, *hath* given the victory. The singer speaks in the full assurance of faith that the prayer is heard, and as if he already saw the victory gained. The prayer had been (vs. 1, 2) that God would hear and send help from the *earthly* sanctuary or Zion. Now the answer is said to come from his holy *heaven*. For if God then condescended to dwell in visible glory among men, yet He would teach His people that He is not limited by the bounds of time and space. He sends help out of Zion ; but the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him. P.—Here, as in Psalm 18 : 50, *His Messiah or Anointed One* includes the whole succession of genuine theocratic kings, not excepting Him whose representatives they were, and in whom the royal line was at the same time closed and made perpetual. A.

7. Some trust in chariots. In war, chariots, horses, navies, numbers, discipline, former successes, are relied on ; but the battle is not to the strong. “ Providence favors the strong battalions ” may sound well, but neither Providence nor the Bible so teaches. In peace, riches, friends, ships, farms, stocks are relied upon, yet they can neither help nor save. Let him that glorieth glory in the Lord. *W. S. Plumer.*—Some there are who put their trust (as the Psalmist says) in *chariots* and *horses*, and

dream they shall live forever in those palaces which are but the outhouses of the grave. There are very few men, in fact, who are capable of withstanding the constant effect of artificial distinctions ; it is difficult to live upon a throne and to think of a tomb ; it is difficult to be clothed in splendor and to remember we are dust ; it is difficult for the rich and the prosperous to keep their hearts as a burning coal upon the altar, and to humble themselves before God as they rise before men. In the meantime, while pride gathers in the heart, the angel is ever writing in the book, and wrath is ever mantling in the cup. *Sydney Smith.*

We will mention the name of the Lord. Great certainly is the faith which hath such courage by remembering the name of the Lord. Soldiers in our day are wont, when they go into battle, to recall to mind the brave exploits of their fathers, or former victories, and the like, wherewith to warm and stir their hearts. But let our princes remember the name of God, wherein all salvation and victory do stand. *Luther.*—The life wholly occupied with the present is necessarily superficial. Recollection and anticipation broaden and deepen life. Memory enriches it by making us grateful for Divine goodness, humble in the consciousness of our failings and infirmities, wise from the lessons of experience, and diligent to redeem the time that remains. *Adeney.*

8. How different the end of those whose trusts are different ! The enemies of God are uppermost at first, but they ere long are brought down by force, their chariots are burned in the fire, and their horses die of pestilence, and where is their boasted strength ? As for those who rest on Jehovah, they are often cast down at the first onset, but an Almighty arm uplifts them, and they joyfully stand upright. The victory of Jesus is the inheritance of His people. The world, death, Satan, and sin shall all be trampled beneath the feet of the champions of faith ; while those who rely upon an arm of flesh shall be ashamed and confounded forever. S.

9. The hymn concludes congregationally, as it had begun, and is rounded off by reverting to its original tone, praying for the fulfilment of that which has been besought and pledged. D.

PSALM XXI.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN. A PSALM OF DAVID.

- 1 THE king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD ;
And in thy salvation how greatly shall he
rejoice !
- 2 Thou hast given him his heart's desire,
And hast not withholden the request of his
lips. [Selah]
- 3 For thou preventest [*comest to meet*] him
with the blessings of goodness :
Thou settest a crown of fine gold on his
head.
- 4 He asked life of thee, thou gavest it him ;
Even length of days for ever and ever.
- 5 His glory is great in thy salvation :
Honour and majesty dost thou lay upon him.
- 6 For thou makest him most blessed [*to be
blessings*] for ever :
Thou makest him glad with joy in thy pres-
ence.
- 7 For the king trusteth in the LORD,
And through the lovingkindness of the Most
High he shall not be moved.

- 8 Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies :
Thy right hand shall find out those that
hate thee.
- 9 Thou shalt make them as a fiery furnace in
the time of thine anger.
The LORD shall swallow them up in his
wrath,
And the fire shall devour them.
- 10 Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the
earth,
And their seed from among the children of
men.
- 11 For they intended evil against thee :
They imagined a device, which they are not
able to perform.
- 12 For thou shalt make them turn their back,
Thou shalt make ready with thy bowstrings
against the face of them.
- 13 Be thou exalted, O LORD, in thy strength :
So will we sing and praise thy power.

IN the preceding Psalm the people, interced-
ing for their king, cried to him, " May Jehovah
fulfil all thy desires ;" in this they can say
thankfully to God, " The desire of his heart
hast Thou granted him." In both Psalms the
people appear before God in connection with
matters that concern their king ; in the former
desiring and praying, in the latter thanking
and hoping ; here as well as there in the midst
of war ; here, however, now that the king has
recovered, in the assurance that the war will
be brought to a victorious issue. The Targum
and the Talmud understand this Psalm as re-
ferring to king Messiah. Raschi remarks that,
because of the Christians one should rather give
up this Messianic interpretation. But even
Christian exegesis cannot be disposed to main-
tain the Messianic interpretation in the rigid
and direct manner of earlier days. The two
Psalms treat of David ; David's cause, how-
ever, in its way through suffering to victory, is
typically the cause of the coming Christ. D.
—Like the last, this Psalm is Messianic, and
in the same sense. Each Jewish monarch was
but a feeble type of Israel's true King ; and all
the hopes and aspirations of pious hearts, how-
ever they might have for their *immediate* object
the then reigning monarch, whether David him-

self or one of David's children, still looked be-
yond these to Him who should be David's Lord
as well as his son. P

1. The king shall joy in Thy strength, O Lord. This king is David. The Hebrew word lacks the article which dis-
tinguishes it from *the* King, the great King of
Psalm 20 : 9. Yet the relations were close be-
tween David, the Lord's chosen and anointed
king of Israel, and the Great Anointed One
(Messiah), his prophetic son and his successor
on an eternal throne. The tone of this verse is
that of exultant joy in the strength of the Most
High, who had given David a signal victory
over his most formidable enemies. C.—David
wrote of himself in the third person, and as
"*the king*." He penned the Psalm, not so
much for his own use, as for his people's. It
is, in fact, a national anthem, celebrating the
majesty and glory of David, but ascribing both
to God—expressing confidence in David's fu-
ture, but building that confidence upon God
alone. S. Martin.

In Thy salvation shall he rejoice.
Oh, it is good rejoicing in the strength of that
arm which shall never wither, and in the shad-
ow of those wings which shall never cast their
feathers ! in Him that is not there yesterday

and here to day, but the same yesterday, to-day, and forever! For as He is, so shall the joy be. *Launcelot Andrews.*

3. Thou preventest him with blessings of goodness. Mercy, in the case of many of us, ran before our desires and prayers, and it ever outruns our endeavors and expectations, and even our hopes are left to lag behind. Preventient grace deserves a song; we may make one out of this sentence. All our mercies are to be viewed as "*blessings*;" gifts of a blessed God, meant to make us blessed; they are "*blessings of goodness*," not of merit, but of free favor; and they come to us in a *preventing way*, such as only preventing love could have arranged. In this light the verse is itself a sonnet! S.

"Thou goest before him—*with goodness*." The words "*blessings of goodness*" suggest that God's gifts are God's love embodied and expressed. And this greatly enhances the value of our blessings—that they are cups as full of God and of God's kindness as of happiness and blessedness. *S. Martin.*—A large portion of our blessing is given us before our asking or seeking. Existence, reason, intellect, a birth in a Christian land, the calling of our nation to the knowledge of Christ, and Christ Himself, with many other things, are unsought bestowed on men. *Plumer.*

4. The last clause shows that the life which David prayed for was not personal longevity, but the indefinite continuation of his race, an honor which was granted to him, even beyond his hopes and wishes, in the person of our Saviour. A.—The form of expression here and v. 6, supposed to be inapplicable to any earthly monarch, has led some to refer the Psalm to the Messiah. Still, this would not exclude a primary reference to David, although we know that whatever was true of the glory and dignity and length of life of David as king of Israel, is far truer in its spiritual and eternal sense of Christ the Son of David. P.—See also, and rejoice in, the length of the days of Christ's kingdom. He was dead indeed, that we might live through Him; but He is alive, and lives forevermore, and *of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end*; and because He thus lives, we shall thus live also. H.

5. *Great shall be his majesty in Thy salvation; glory and honor Thou wilt put upon him.* His personal experience of God's saving grace, and his connection with the great scheme of salvation for mankind, would raise him to a dignity far beyond that of any other monarch, and completely justifying even the most exalted

terms used in Scripture from the charge of adulation or extravagance.

6. *For Thou wilt make him a blessing to eternity.* He shall not only be blessed himself, but a blessing to others, the idea and expression being both derived from the promise to Abraham in Gen. 12:2, an allusion which serves also to connect the Davidic with the Abrahamic covenant, and thus to preserve unbroken the great chain of Messianic prophecies. *Make him a blessing*, literally, *place him for (or constitute him) blessing*. The plural form suggests variety and fulness. A.

"*Thou hast set him to be blessings forever*" (so the margin reads it), "Thou hast made him to be a universal, everlasting blessing to the world, in whom the families of the earth are and shall be blessed; and so Thou hast made him exceeding glad with the countenance thou hast given to his undertaking, and to him in the prosecution of it." See how the spirit of prophecy gradually rises here to that which is peculiar to Christ, for none besides is blessed forever, much less a blessing forever to that eminency that the expression denotes; and of him it is said, that God made him full of joy with His countenance. H.

Glad with joy. The language shows that when the light of God's countenance shines, and men walk in it, there is no stint, no limit, no measure, to the full heart's joy. Exceeding gladness is not gladness which can be measured. It is gladness which capacity does not equal and even desire cannot surpass, gladness beyond our utmost wish, in excess of our largest conception. Long as our capacity for enjoyment lasts, God's countenance makes the heart glad. If God has lifted upon us the light of His countenance, let us try constantly to realize what that means and be of good cheer. *W. Landels.*

7. A reason why the blessing is vouchsafed. It is a blessing given to faith. The king trusts not in himself, not in chariots or horses, but in the Most High. The king, who was spoken of in the third person at the beginning of the Psalm, is here again also spoken of in the third person. And thus a preparation is made for the transition to a direct address, with which the next strophe opens. P.

8. *Thy hand shall find out all Thine enemies; Thy right hand shall find (those) hating Thee.* Having shown what God would do for His anointed, the Psalm now describes what the latter shall accomplish through Divine assistance. By a kind of climax in the form of expression, *hand* is followed by *right hand*, a still more emphatic sign of active strength. To

find, in this connection, includes the ideas of detecting and reaching. A.—It is not meant only of a discovery of a person (though it be a truth that the Lord will discover all that are His enemies), but *Thine hand shall find them out*, it shall take hold of them, grasp them, and arrest them. “Thine hand shall find out” all “thine enemies,” though close, though covert enemies; not only Thy above-ground enemies, but Thy under-ground enemies; as well those that undermine Thee, as those that assault Thee. *Caryl*.

9. *Thou shalt make them like a fiery furnace at the time of Thy presence.* To make them like a furnace here means, not to make them the destroyers of others, but, by a natural abbreviation, to make them as if they were in a fiery furnace. *At the time of Thy presence*, literally, *Thy face*, which may be understood to mean, *when Thou lookest at them.* A.

9-12. There is no escaping God's avenging eye, no going out of the reach of His hand; rocks and mountains will be no better shelter at last than fig-leaves were at first. The destruction will be an utter destruction. *Their fruit and thir seed shall be destroyed* (v. 10). The enemies of God's kingdom, in every age, shall fall under the same doom, and the whole generation of them will at last be rooted out, and all opposing rule, principality, and power shall be put down. The arrows of God's wrath shall confound them and put them to flight, being levelled at the face of them (v. 12). That will be the lot of daring enemies that face God. Those that might have had Christ to rule and save them, but rejected Him and fought against Him, shall find that even the remembrance of that will be enough to make them to eternity a fiery oven to themselves; it is the worm that dies not. H.

PSALM XXII.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN; SET TO AJELETH HASH-SHAHAR. A PSALM OF DAVID.

1 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?

Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring ?

2 O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou answerest not ;

And in the night season, and am not silent.

3 But thou art holy,

O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

4 Our fathers trusted in thee :

They trusted, and thou didst deliver them.

5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered :

They trusted in thee, and were not ashamed.

6 But I am a worm, and no man ;

A reproach of men, and despised of the people.

7 All they that see me laugh me to scorn :

They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, *saying,*

8 Commit *thyself* unto the LORD ; let him deliver him :

Let him deliver him, seeing he delighteth in him.

9 But thou art he that took me out of the womb ;

Thou didst make me trust *when I was* upon my mother's breasts.

10 I was cast upon thee from the womb :

Thou art my God since my mother bare me.

11 Be not far from me ; for trouble is near ;

For there is none to help

12 Many bulls have compassed me :

Strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.

13 They gape upon me with their mouth,

As a ravening and a roaring lion.

14 I am poured out like water,

And all my bones are out of joint :

My heart is like wax ;

It is melted in the midst of my bowels.

15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd ;

And my tongue cleaveth to my jaws ;

And thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

16 For dogs have compassed me :

The assembly of evil-doers have inclosed me ;

They pierced my hands and my feet.

17 I may tell all my bones ;

They look and stare upon me :

18 They part my garments among them,

And upon my vesture do they cast lots.

- 19 But be not thou far off, O LORD :
O thou my succour, haste thee to help me.
- 20 Deliver my soul from the sword ;
My darling from the power of the dog.
- 21 Save me from the lion's mouth ;
Yea, from the horns of the wild-oxen thou
hast answered me.
- 22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren :
In the midst of the congregation will I praise
thee.
- 23 Ye that fear the LORD, praise him ;
All ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him ;
And stand in awe of him, all ye the seed of
Israel.
- 24 For he hath not despised nor abhorred the
affliction of the afflicted ;
Neither hath he hid his face from him ;
But when he cried unto him, he heard.
- 25 Of thee cometh my praise in the great con-
gregation :
I will pay my vows before them that fear him.
- 26 The meek shall eat and be satisfied :
They shall praise the LORD that seek after
him :
Let your heart live for ever.
- 27 All the ends of the earth shall remember and
turn unto the LORD :
And all the kindreds of the nations shall
worship before thee.
- 28 For the kingdom is the LORD's :
And he is the ruler over the nations.
- 29 All the fat ones of the earth shall eat and
worship :
All they that go down to the dust shall bow
before him,
Even he that cannot keep his soul alive.
- 30 A seed shall serve him ;
It shall be told of the Lord unto the *next*
generation.
- 31 They shall come and shall declare his right-
eousness
Unto a people that shall be born, that he
hath done it.

THE Psalm has three distinct parts. The first (1-11) describes the deep anguish of the sufferer apparently forsaken by God, and despised by man, alternating with strong expressions of trust in God's holiness and love. In the second (12-21), the circumstances which cause the anguish are vividly portrayed, but the description is blended with earnest and devout supplication. In the third part (22-31), the strain changes suddenly, the Psalm calls on all to join in praising God for an accomplished deliverance, and announces the extension of God's kingdom to all kindreds of the earth.

The Messianic character of the twenty second Psalm is vindicated by a remarkable variety of evidences, which are separately strong, and in their combination overwhelming. We have, in the first place, positive evidence: the use of the first words by our Lord in His last agony. This may, of course, be explained away either as a simple reminiscence, or at the most a recognition of the typical character of the Psalmist's sufferings; but, considering the solemnity of the occasion, we most naturally regard this, like other words and acts connected with the crucifixion, as a seal and attestation to prophecy. This is confirmed by the direct and unqualified testimony of the Apostle John, and by direct quotations and many clear references in the other evangelical accounts of the crucifixion. We have, in the second place, a correspondence with all the details of the sufferings of Christ so minute and exact as to make it cer-

tain that, if those details are truly narrated by the evangelists, they were the fulfilment of prophecy. At the same time it is certain that the traits in their combination are wholly inapplicable to David. There is not only a total absence of consciousness of sin, which might be partly accounted for, supposing them to be a product of his early manhood; but, as is shown in the commentary, from first to last the feelings and events are true of the Man of sorrows, and, to a great extent, of Him alone. The only explanation which meets and satisfies all the conditions of a sound exegesis, that which has been held fast by the Church in all times, and has a sure foundation in Holy Scripture, is that the Psalmist was moved by the Spirit of Christ, so that, whether consciously or unconsciously, he recorded his afflictions, and expressed his hopes, in language which found its perfect fulfilment in the Messiah, of whom David undoubtedly was, and knew himself to be, one of the very chiefest types. *Cook.*

The passages which are quoted from it by the New Testament writers are declared, or assumed to be, prophecies of Christ; the language of this Psalm is appropriated by Christ and used of Himself; and is also taken up, unwittingly, we suppose, yet very suggestively, by Christ's enemies. The very mode of Christ's death is indicated, and this mode is utterly foreign to Jewish usage in capital punishment; and such a death and even such wounds are unknown to Jewish history save in the death of

Christ. Furthermore, the *co-relation* between the latter and former portions of the Psalm conclusively show its Messianic character. The latter portion gives us the *results* of these sufferings. And what are they? First, I will declare Thy name unto My brethren"—words which appear in the last verses of the longest recorded prayer of Jesus (John 17:26), and are here as one of the great ends of His mission to earth. Next a thanksgiving feast in which the sufferer pays his vows after the manner of pious Israelites. This remarkably shades off into the great *Gospel feast*, probably suggesting this current usage of Jesus and of the Gospel historians; for in this case, as in that of Gospel history, the "meek" (*i.e.*, the humble, the broken of heart for sin) "shall eat and be satisfied;" their mouths are filled with praise; their "hearts live forever" with that eternal life which none can give but Jesus; and then the range and scope of these blessings spread out to embrace the "wide, wide world," for "all the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Thee." The Gospel goes forth conquering and to conquer; the rightful rule of the Lord Jehovah becomes supreme over all the nations. Generation after generation, down through the lapse of the ages, this supremacy endures, His kingdom an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion one that has no end. Such are the results of glorious victory and triumph to the Gospel and to the kingdom of Christ over the nations which come of the sufferings through which this Great Sufferer is presented in this Psalm as passing. These results can be no other than those which attend the sufferings of the great Messiah. In Him we see them fully developed. That His sufferings and the consequent "glory" were bound together by the strongest mutual co-relation is signified in those comprehensive words of Peter, giving the gist of Old Testament prophecy, in which "the Spirit of Christ testified beforehand *the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow*" (1 Pet. 1:11). Precisely this co-relation appears in Isaiah 53, where, "making His soul an offering for sin," but seeing the fruit of this agony to His full satisfaction, and "dividing the spoil with the mighty," are the attendant results. The scope of this Psalm, co-relating such results of Gospel victory with such sufferings, shut us up to Christ only and alone as fulfilling this Psalm. C.

The first half of this Psalm coincides with the passion of Jesus Christ, and the second with the consequences that have resulted from His

resurrection. It is the agonizing situation of a crucified one that is pictorially and faithfully presented to us in vs. 14-17: the spreading out of the limbs of the naked body, the torturing of the hands and feet, and the burning thirst which the Redeemer, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, announced in the cry, John 19:28. Men who reviled Him and shook their head at Him passed by His cross just as v. 7 says; scorers cried to Him: "Let the God in whom He trusts deliver Him," just as v. 8 says; His garments were divided and lots were cast for His coat in order that v. 18 of our Psalm might be fulfilled. The third last of the seven words of the dying one is the first word of our Psalm and the appropriation of the whole. And the Epistle to the Hebrews (2:11 f.) quotes v. 22 as the words of Christ, in order to show that He is not ashamed to call those His brethren, whose sanctifier God has appointed Him to be, just as the risen One has actually done (Matt. 28:10; John 20:17). We are far from having exhausted the reciprocal relations. The Psalm so sets before our eyes not merely the suffering of the crucified One, but also the redemption of the world that resulted from His resurrection and the sacramental appropriation of that redemption.

For us, who look upon the whole Psalm as the words of David, it does not thereby lose anything of its prophetic character. It is a typical Psalm. The very same God, who communicates His thoughts of redemption to the spirit of man and there causes them to become the word of prophetic proclamation, has also so shaped history itself that it has become a prefigurative representation of the coming salvation; and the evidence for the truth of Christianity which may be deduced from these prophetic facts of history is no less convincing than that which may be deduced from verbal prophecy. That David, the anointed of Samuel, before he reached the throne had to go a way of suffering which resembles the way of suffering of Jesus, the Son of David baptized by John, and that this typical suffering of David is fixed for us in the Psalms as in images reflected from a mirror—this is also an appointment of Divine power, grace, and wisdom. But this Psalm is not merely typical. For in it David descends with his complaints to a depth that lies beyond the depth of his suffering, and rises with his hopes to a height which lies beyond the height of the reward of his suffering. The typical is elevated into the prophetic. Since David has been anointed with the oil of royal consecration and at the same time also with the Holy Spirit,

the official Spirit of the kingship of promise, he looks upon himself as the Messiah of God, to whom the promises point; and in virtue of this way of looking at himself in the light of the highest calling that could be assigned to one in connection with the history of redemption, the historical reality of his experiences becomes idealized to him, and both what he experiences and what he hopes for thereby acquire a depth and height of background which reach out into the history of the final and true Christ of God. He sees in himself the coming One, the image of whom does not till somewhat later detach itself from him, and whose history will completely coincide with all that is hyperbolic in the expressions that he employs. For as God the Father fashions the history of Jesus Christ in conformity with His own counsel, so His Spirit fashions also the statements of David, the type of the coming One, regarding himself, with a view to that history. By means of this Spirit, which is at once the Spirit of God and of the coming Christ, David's typical history, as he narrates it in his Psalms and more especially in this one, has acquired that ideal depth, transfiguration and intensity, in virtue of which it is far more than a mere statement of typical facts, penetrates to the root of these facts in the Divine counsel, and grows to be the word of prophecy; so that, to a certain extent, it may rightly be said that Christ speaks here through David, inasmuch as the Spirit of Christ speaks through him and makes the prefigurative suffering of His ancestor the means whereby His own future passion is represented. Without the recognition of this irrefragable state of the case, this Psalm can neither be understood nor sympathetically reproduced. D.

Loaded with the sins of the world, Jesus began the Psalm upon the Cross to show that it was His. Four out of the last Seven Words certainly are taken from, or refer to, this portion of the Psalter. From the first verse on, there is scarcely a line which might not have come from the pen of an evangelist. Instead of a colorless scene, instead of unmitigated darkness and inextricable confusion, there is color and detail. The echo of part of this very Psalm, hideously distorted and caricatured, comes up in the ears of the Forsaken One. Burning thirst; violent tension of suspended members, making the frame like that of a living skeleton; rude spectators gambling over the raiment; some wrong, probably piercing, done to the hands and feet; the feeling strange and out of place in God's universe—all these are represented vividly and powerfully. Nineteen

centuries of contemplation at the foot of the Cross have shown faith no discord between the Crucified Lord whom she adores, and Him who cries "Eli, Eli." If she ever tries in vain to get a glimpse of His features, it is because she cannot see distinctly for tears. But there is more than this. The sufferer passes to glory by the edge of the sword (or a violent death), from the lion's mouth, from the claws of the dog, from the horns of the unicorn. The minute touch in the twenty-second verse, referred to in the Epistle to the Hebrews ("He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy Name unto My brethren"), might not, by itself, attract our attention; but then it comes from Him who has cried, "Eli, Eli," whose hands and feet have been pierced; and we note that twice only, in quick succession, just after the Resurrection, our Lord is recorded to have applied the word "brethren" to His servants. The wonder of the Psalm is brought to a climax by the ordered development in which all is given. First, He who suffers is laid into the very dust of death. Then, risen from that dust, He proclaims His Name to His brethren, beginning from the Jews, and ending with the Gentiles from the very furthest parts of the earth. *Bishop Alexander.*

1-11. The cry of anguish, which begins with a lamentation over prolonged desertion by God, struggles through to a trustful prayer. The question (v. 1) is not an expression of impatience and despair, but of surprise and yearning. The sufferer feels himself to be rejected by God; the feeling of Divine wrath surrounds him entirely with darkness; and yet he knows himself to be united to God in fear and love; his present condition is wholly out of keeping with the real nature of his relationship to God; and it is this very contradiction that urges him to put the plaintive question, which rises from the lowest depths, Why hast Thou forsaken me? But notwithstanding this feeling of desertion by God, the bond of love is not broken; the mourner calls God, *my God*; urged on by the longing that God would grant him once more to feel this love, he calls Him *my God!* The crucified One's desertion by God, however, must not be measured by that of David and of other sufferers who thus complain when they find themselves exposed to sore trial. The crucified One is even to His latest breath the Holy One of God, and the propitiation, for which He offers Himself, is God's own eternal, gracious will, which is now being realized in the fulness of the times; but seeing that He submits Himself with the sin of His people

and of the whole of humanity to God's judgment, it cannot be spared Him to experience God's wrath against sinful humanity as if He were personally guilty ; and out of the infinite depths of this tasting of wrath, which in His case rests upon no mere appearance but upon the sternest reality, there comes His complaint, which penetrates the wrath and appeals to God's love. D.

I. Why? Not the "why" of impatience or despair, not the sinful questioning of one whose heart rebels against his chastening, but rather the cry of a lost child who cannot understand why his father has left him, and who longs to see his father's face again. It is the question of faith as well as of an anguish that cannot be told. For he who asks "why," nevertheless calls God "*my God*," and repeats the appropriating word again and again, with the very emphasis of faith. Indeed, such a question can only be asked by one whom God has taken into covenant with Himself, and to whom He has vouchsafed His promises. What these words were in the lips of the Holy One of God, heart of man may not conceive. For a moment, in that last agony, the Perfect Man was *alone*—alone with the sin of the world. But it is going beyond Scripture to say that a sense of God's wrath extorted that cry. For to the last breath He was the well-beloved of the Father, and the repeated "My God," "My God," is a witness even then to His confidence in the Father's love. Stier says, with great truth : "Neither could the damned in hell so call to God and ask, nor could Christ have done so if He were really to be considered here as suffering in their place." P.

When God chose that costliest means of our deliverance, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, we may be quite sure that at no lower price would our redemption have been possible, that nothing short of this could have satisfied that righteousness of His, which He was bound to maintain ; which He could not forego, without shaking to their strong foundation those eternal pillars on which the moral universe reposes ; we may be quite sure that no weaker or poorer motives than those in this way presented to man would have ever succeeded in making him holy, and thus capable of blessedness. *Trench.*

The Incarnation is not the whole Gospel. The body of His flesh becomes the means of our reconciliation "through death." Christ's death has so met the requirements of the Divine law that the Divine love can come freely forth, and embrace and forgive sinful men.

That fact is the very centre of the revelation of God in Christ, the very secret of His power. He has died. Voluntarily and of His own love, as well as in obedience to the Father's loving will, He has borne the consequences of the sin which He had never shared, in that life of sorrow and sympathy, in that separation from God which is sin's deepest penalty, and of which the solemn witness comes to us in the cry that rent the darkness, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and in that physical death which is the parable in the material sphere of the true death of the spirit. We do not know all the incidence of Christ's death. The whole manner of its operation has not been told us, but the fact has been. It does not affect the Divine heart. *That* we know, for "God so loved the world, that He sent His Son." But it does affect the Divine government. Without it, forgiveness could not have been. Its influence extends to all the years before, as to all after Calvary, for that Man continued to be after Man had sinned, was because the whole Divine government then had respect to the sacrifice that was to be, as now it all is moulded by the merit of the sacrifice that has been. As for us, that wondrous love—mightier than death, and not to be quenched by many waters—is the one power that can change our alienation to glad friendship, and melt the ice of indifference and dread into love. That, and that alone, is the solvent for stubborn wills, the magnet for distant hearts. The cross of Christ is the keystone of the universe and the conqueror of all enmity. A. M.

2, 3. He hears nothing from God as to the deliverance prayed for, yet no murmuring at God's proceedings ; nay, quite the contrary, for he justifies and praises God : "*But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.*" Observe whether thou canst not gather something from the manner of God's denying the thing prayed for, which may sweeten it to thee ! Haply thou shalt find He denies thee, but it is with a smiling countenance, and ushers it in with some expressions of grace and favor that may assure thee His denial proceeds not from displeasure. *Gurnall.*

3. *And Thou (art) holy, inhabiting the praises of Israel.* Here begins his statement of the grounds on which he might claim to be heard, and all which may be summed up in this, that Jehovah was the covenant God of Israel. The word translated *holy*, in its widest sense, includes all that distinguishes God from creatures, not excepting what are usually termed His natural perfections. Hence the epithet is often

found connected with descriptions of His power, eternity, etc. A.

Thou art holy. Does it seem strange that the heart in its darkness and sorrow should find comfort in this attribute of God? No, for God's holiness is but another aspect of His faithfulness and mercy. And in that remarkable name, "the Holy One of Israel," we are taught that He who is the "holy" God is also the God who has made a covenant with His chosen. It would be impossible for an Israelite to think of God's holiness without thinking also of that covenant relationship. "Be ye holy; for I, the Lord your God, am holy," were the words in which Israel was reminded of their relation to God. P.

Inhabitest. Or, "dwellest among." God is thus represented as enthroned in His sanctuary, where the praises and adorations of His worshippers, symbolized by the streams of incense, rise continually before Him. The word "inhabitest" refers to the throne, of which the cherubim, whose forms were on the mercy-seat, are the mystic supporters. The appeal expresses with infinite tenderness and delicacy the thought that, since God is ever receiving the prayers of His people, He will surely answer them in the person of their representative; a thought enlarged upon in the following verses. Cook.

6. Each word re-echoes in the second part of the Book of Isaiah. There, as here, Israel is called a worm (41 : 14); there all these traits of suffering are found in the picture of the Servant of God (49 : 7; 53 : 3), and more especially in 52 : 14: "So marred was His visage, that He no longer looked like a man." D.

7, 8. The scornful ridicule of our Lord was universal; all sorts of men were unanimous in the derisive laughter, and vied with each other in insulting Him. Priests and people, Jews and Gentiles, soldiers and civilians, all united in the general scoff, and that at the time when He was prostrate in weakness and ready to die. Which shall we wonder at the most, the cruelty of man or the love of the bleeding Saviour? How can we ever complain of ridicule after this? On reading these verses one is ready, with Trapp, to ask, Is this a prophecy or a history? for the description is so accurate. We must not lose sight of the truth which was unwittingly uttered by the Jewish scoffers. They themselves are witnesses that Jesus of Nazareth trusted in God; why then was He permitted to perish? Jehovah had aforetime delivered those who rolled their burdens upon Him; why was this man deserted? Oh, that they had under-

stood the answer! Note further, that their ironical jest, "*seeing He delighted in Him*," was true. The Lord did delight in His dear Son, and when He was found in fashion as a man, and became obedient unto death, He still was well pleased with Him. Jehovah delights in Him, and yet bruises Him; is well pleased, and yet slays Him. S.

8. *Trust in Jehovah! He will deliver him, He will save him, for He delights in him.* The literal meaning of the first clause is: *roll to (or on) Jehovah*, which would be unintelligible but for the parallel expressions in Psalm 37 : 5, *roll thy way upon Jehovah*, and in Prov. 16 : 3, *roll thy work upon Jehovah*, where the idea is evidently that of a burden cast upon another by one who is unable to sustain it himself. This burden, in the first case, is his *way*, i.e., his course of life, his fortune, his destiny, and in the other case, his *work*, i.e., his business, his affairs, his interest. In evident allusion to these places the Apostle Peter says, *casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you*. By these three parallels light is thrown on the elliptical expression now before us, *roll*, i.e., thy burden or thy care, *upon Jehovah*. Perhaps the best solution of the syntax is to make this clause a quotation or derisive repetition of the sufferer's own words, as if they had said: "This is he who was so fond of repeating the precept, Trust in Jehovah! Let him now try its virtue in his own case. He in whom he has trusted, and exhorted others to trust also, will no doubt deliver him." A.

The Hebrew word translated "trusted" (i.e., "on the Lord") means primarily to *roll*, i.e., to devolve upon the Lord whatever may be your burden. It stands here in the imperative—a fact best explained by supposing that his revilers tauntingly retort his own words: "Thou who hast so often said, Roll every burden upon Jehovah, try it in thine own time of need. God will doubtless deliver thee! God will rescue him, for He delights in him!"—all said in contemptuous irony. The men who thus reviled him were the last men in the world to believe one word of it. All these words were said by the scribes and Pharisees to the suffering Jesus in the very spirit which is here indicated. Unconsciously to themselves they were fulfilling prophecy, altogether unaware that "thus it was written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer" (Luke 24 : 46). C.

9-11. He mentions his mother twice. Throughout the whole of the Old Testament there is no mention whatever of a human father, i.e., begetter, of the Messiah; it is always only

His mother or bearer that is spoken of. The words of the one who is praying here also imply that, looked at with respect to its outward circumstances, the beginning of his life was poor and needy ; and this likewise accords with the picture of Christ drawn in the Old Testament, as well as with that in the New. On the ground of his fellowship with God, which reaches so far back, there is now (v. 11) raised the cry for help, which already runs through all he has as yet said, but which only now finds expression. D.

9. "Thou drew me out of the womb, and caused me to hope upon the breast." Thus David claims kindness to God, because he is His workmanship, that he may draw nearer to Him, to clasp Him, as a Redeemer. The most tempted soul cannot deny but it is God's creature ; and those who are most hardly exercised and doubt if ever Christ minded to save them, and will disclaim Him as a Redeemer, yet will they not disclaim Him as a Creator. If then, in the time of sore temptation, thou wilt grant that thou art His creature, are there not some bands between thee and God ? Claim to God as thy creator, to get farther kindness ; by this means a door is open to go in to God's outer court, and from that to the inner court also. *Dickson.*

14, 15. The comparison with water is applied to moral weakness also in Gen. 49 : 4. The parting of the bones may either denote dislocation or extreme emaciation, making the bones prominent. In either case the essential idea is still that of desperate exhaustion and debility. A.—These various phrases combine to give the idea of extreme nervous exhaustion. Such we know to have been the last hours of Jesus. A whole night, not only sleepless but full of earnest thought and intense emotion ; the pass-over, the long conversations and prayer which fill five precious chapters in John's narrative (13-17) ; the scenes of Gethsemane, the betrayal and arrest ; the preliminary examination before Ananias ; the more protracted one before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrim ; the hearing before Pilate ; then before Herod ; then again before Pilate ; the decree for His crucifixion ; the weary faintness which sunk under the wood of His own cross—all these things were at once the causes and the proofs of exhaustion really extreme, leaving no nervous energy to bear up against the terrible agony of crucifixion. C.

16. *For dogs are come about me.* The enemies are still compared to savage animals, but the figure is somewhat different ; "dogs," not only as fierce, but as unclean. Almost the only trait of bitterness in the

Psalm. We must remember that these dogs are the savage wild dogs of the East. P.—Every Oriental city and village abounds with troops of hungry and half-savage dogs, which own allegiance to the place rather than to persons, and wander about the streets and fields, howling dismally at night, and devouring even the dead bodies of men when they can reach them. *Tristram.*

The word for "pierced" has tasked the labors of critics to the utmost. In view of all the evidence in the case I concur in the conclusion reached by Feurst, the latest authority in lexicography—viz., that "it should be translated either '*piercing*,' or '*they pierced* my hands and my feet.' " This sense being granted, the passage becomes a remarkably definite prediction of the manner of the Saviour's death on the cross. C.—The fulfilment by the nailing of the hands and (at least the binding fast) of the feet of the crucified One is exceedingly plain. Not only here is it prophesied that the coming Christ will be murderously pierced, but also in Isa. 53 : 5, where He is said to be pierced through because of our sins, and in Zech. 12 : 10. D.—The very manner of His death is described, though never in use among the Jews. *They pierced my hands and my feet*, which were nailed to the accursed tree, the effect of which must needs be the most exquisite pain and torture. There is no one passage in all the Old Testament which the Jews have so industriously corrupted as this, because it is such an eminent prediction of the death of Christ, and was so exactly fulfilled. H.

Of all sanguinary punishments, that of crucifixion is one of the most dreadful—no vital part is immediately affected by it. The tearing asunder of the tender fibres of the hands and feet, the lacerating of so many nerves and bursting so many blood-vessels, must be productive of intense agony. The nerves of the hand and foot are intimately connected with the nerves of the whole body ; their laceration therefore must be felt over the entire frame. When, therefore, the hands and feet of our blessed Lord were transfixed with nails, He must have felt the sharpest pangs shoot through every part of His body. *John Stevenson.*—Some have thought that those scars remain still in His glorious body, to be showed at His second appearing : "They shall see Him whom they have pierced." That is improbable, but this is certain ; there remains still an impression upon Christ's hands and His heart, the sealing and wearing of the elect there, as precious jewels. *T. Adams.*

17. Some suppose, not improbably, that this verse presents the sufferer as stripped by His enemies, and looking with grief and wonder at His own emaciation, while they gaze at it with delight, as the Hebrew phrase implies.

18. *They (are about to) divide my garments for themselves, and on my clothing they (are ready to) cast lots.* This is the last stroke necessary to complete the picture. Having stripped him, nothing more is left but to appropriate his garments, whether from cupidity or in derision. The futures intimate that things can go no further without actual loss of life, and that the case is therefore an extreme one. The providential realization of this ideal scene in our Lord's history is expressly mentioned by all the four evangelists. *A.*—From the pen of John (19 : 23, 24) we have the particulars in full. The crucifixion was performed by four Roman soldiers. According to usage, the clothes of the malefactor were their perquisite. In the present case they divided all except the seamless robe into four parts, but this robe (such as the priests wore), a garment woven without seam, was so peculiar and so valuable they said, Let it not be rent, *i.e.*, for division among us, but let the lot determine who shall have it. It is safe to say that such a series of particulars could not be combined in any merely human prophecy and its fulfilment more than once in ten thousand public executions. Such cases test the genuineness of prophecy. No eye save that of God could foresee such minute yet improbable events. *C.*

How deep must be the humiliation of the King of glory ! The twenty-second Psalm answers : He shall be abased even unto abandonment by God, unto desertion and mockery at the hands of all men. He shall be as a crushed worm. His hands and feet shall be pierced ; yea, even His clothes shall be taken and divided under the eyes of the Martyr, as though He were already dead, and the inheritance had fallen to His murderers. Go to Golgotha, and there see the fulfilment. Jesus prays : " My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ? " His disciples forsake Him in Gethsemane. Those who pass by the cross blaspheme and mock Him with the words : " If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." They pierce His hands and His feet with iron nails, and under the cross the soldiers cast lots for His garments. *A. Caspars.*

" Vicarious suffering !"—it is strange to hear the mighty uproar which is made about it ; when, indeed, in lower forms—not low in themselves, though low as compared with the high-

est—it is everywhere where love is at all. For, indeed, is not this, of one freely taking on himself the consequence of others' faults, and thus averting from those others, at least in part, the penalties of the same, building what others have thrown down, gathering what others have scattered, bearing the burdens which others have wrapped together, healing the wounds which others have inflicted, paying the things which he never took, smarting for sins which he never committed—is not this, I say, the law and condition of all highest nobleness in the world ?—is it not that which God is continually demanding of His elect, they approving themselves His elect, as they do not shrink from this demand, as they freely own themselves the debtors of love to the last requirements which it makes ? And if these things are so, shall we question the right of God Himself to display this nobleness which He demands of His creatures ? Shall we wish to rob Him of the opportunity, or think to honor Him who is highest love, by denying Him the right to display it ? *Trench.*

19-21. Christ's desertion is *preventive* of our final desertion. Because He was forsaken for a time we shall not be forsaken forever. For He was forsaken for us. *Flavel.*—There was no failure in Christ's obedience, and yet Christ was forsaken in point of comfort ; therefore desertion, in point of comfort, may consist with truth of grace, yea, with the highest measure of grace ; so it did in our Saviour. *John Row.*

22-31. In these verses the great plaintive prayer concludes with thanks and hope. In the assurance of being answered there follows the vow of thanksgiving. His fellow countrymen, who are connected with him not only by ties of nature, but also, as the following expression, " Ye that fear Jehovah," shows, by spiritual ties, he calls " brethren." The sufferer is conscious of the significance that his lot of suffering has in connection with the history of redemption. He will, therefore, make the salvation which has been granted him common property. The community shall hear the Gospel of his deliverance. In v. 23 there follows the preamble of this proclamation of salvation, a proclamation which is addressed to the whole of Israel, so far as it fears the God of revelation. *D.*

22, 23. The whole strain changes ; the clouds are dispersed ; from the depth of humiliation, the prostration of strength, the agony of death, the dust of the grave, the speaker passes at once into a state of perfect peace and exultation. Such a transition David may have

been able to realize by events in his own life, else had the representation been unreal and cold; but in order to realize it so vividly his spirit must have been raised into a sphere of spiritual life, which gave a new meaning to all that he had experienced. We may also surely infer that this Psalm could not have been written in the midst of afflictions so terrible—then the joy would have been premature; nor could it have been written afterward by David in his own person, for the sufferings are represented as present, and as terminating in death. Spoken in the person of Christ all is clear: the transition of feeling corresponds exactly to that described in the last verses of the fifty-third and the first part of the fifty-fourth chapters of Isaiah, where the joy of God's sacrificed servant is shared by the redeemed people, and sealed by the conversion of the heathen.

22. *I will declare.* See Heb. 2: 12, where these words are expressly assigned to the "Captain of our salvation" made "perfect through sufferings." *Cook.*—The same that began the Psalm complaining, who was no other than Christ in His humiliation, ends it here triumphing, and it can be no other than Christ in His exaltation. And as the first words of the complaint were used by Christ Himself upon the cross, so the first words of the triumph are expressly applied to Him (Heb. 2: 12), and are made His own words: *I will declare Thy name unto My brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee.* The certain prospect which Christ had of the joy set before Him not only gave Him a satisfactory answer to His prayers, but turned His complaints into praises; He saw of the travail of His soul, and was well satisfied; witness that triumphant word where-with He breathed His last, *It is finished.* *H.*—The very point affirmed here, "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren," expresses in briefest, most comprehensive terms, one of the main purposes of His earthly mission, and, moreover, in the very language which Himself used in His remarkable prayer (John 17: 26): "I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it." That is, I have done what the Spirit of prophecy by the mouth of David indicated as the first and chief end of My earthly mission touching My redeemed brethren. "In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee"—following in the *manner* of public praise the usages of pious Israelites in the age of David. So we should expect. How else could the sense be conveyed save by words and allusions familiar to those Hebrew readers? *C.*

23. *Fearers of Jehovah, praise Him! All the*

seed of Jacob, glorify Him! And be afraid of Him, all the seed of Israel! These words are uttered, as it were, in the midst of the ideal congregation mentioned in the verse preceding. That the call, though formally addressed to the whole race, was really intended for the spiritual Israel, excluding wicked Israelites and including the righteous of whatever name or nation, is indicated by the words of the first clause, while the last shows that the praise required is not familiar, but in the highest degree reverential. *A.*

25. Of thee cometh my praise. True praise is of celestial origin. The rarest harmonies of music are nothing unless they are sincerely consecrated to God by hearts sanctified by the Spirit. Oh, when shall our service of song be a pure offering! *S.*

26. The meek shall eat and be satisfied. The words of blessing are, they shall eat and be satisfied. In order to teach men how to be satisfied, it is necessary fully to understand the art and joy of humble life—this, at present, of all arts or sciences being the one most needing study. Humble life—that is to say, proposing to itself no future exaltation, but only a sweet continuance; not excluding the idea of foresight, but wholly of foresorrow, and taking no troublous thought for coming days; so, also, not excluding the idea of providence or provision, but wholly of accumulation; the life of domestic affection and domestic peace, full of sensitiveness to all elements of costless and kind pleasure; therefore largely to the loveliness of the natural world. *Ruskin.*

The Mosaic thanksgiving festival became the germ of the New Testament *Gospel feast* to which our Lord so often compared the Gospel "kingdom of heaven." Of this it is here said, "The meek shall eat and be satisfied." The "meek" in the sense of the Hebrew are the afflicted who have borne their sufferings in patient submission; the humble, the lowly of heart—the very class whom our Lord continually invites to the great Gospel feast. They shall find this provision all-sufficient, and adapted perfectly to their wants. Then they who thus seek God shall have infinite cause to praise Him. "Their heart shall live," in the highest, noblest sense of *life*, forever. Such life lacks no element of real bliss. Its blessedness shall be eternal at God's right hand! Surely this can be nothing less than the blessedness which comes through the glorious Gospel of Jesus! Thus manifestly does this thanksgiving festival bring us into the very marrow and fatness of Gospel blessings. *C.*

It is the same great feast of which Isa. 25 : 6 prophesies, and which he accompanies there with the music of his words. And what the Gospel of the great deed of deliverance effects is not only of unlimited universality, but also of unlimited duration ; it propagates itself from generation to generation. That God has accomplished what He proposed to Himself when He anointed the son of Jesse and the Son of David to be the mediators of His work of salvation ; that He has accomplished it by leading the former through suffering to the throne and by making the cross the ladder whereby the latter ascended to heaven : this is the purport of the preparatory Gospel as well as that of the Gospel in its fulfilment, the purport of the Divine proclamation which is transmitted from generation to generation. D.

A spiritual banquet is prepared in the Church for the “*meek*” and lowly in heart. The death of Christ was the sacrifice for sin ; His flesh is meat indeed and His blood is drink indeed. The poor in spirit feed on this provision in their hearts by faith, and are *satisfied* ; and thus while they “*seek*” the Lord, they “*praise*” Him also, and their souls are preserved unto eternal life. Anon.—*The meek shall eat and be satisfied* ; eat of the bread of life, feed with an appetite upon the doctrine of Christ’s mediation, which is meat and drink to the soul that knows its own nature and case. They that hunger and thirst after righteousness in Christ shall have all they can desire to satisfy them and make them easy, and shall not labor for that which satisfies not. They that are much in praying shall be much in thanksgiving ; *they shall praise the Lord that seek Him*, because through Christ they are sure of finding Him ; and the more earnest they are in seeking Him the more will their hearts be enlarged in His praises when they have found Him. The souls that are devoted to Him shall be forever happy with Him—“*Your heart shall live forever. Yours that are meek, that are satisfied in Christ, that continue to seek God ; whatever becomes of your bodies, your hearts shall live forever ; the graces and comforts you have shall be perfected in everlasting life. Christ has said, Because I live, ye shall live also, and therefore that life shall be as sure and as long as His.*” H.

27. *Remember and return to Jehovah shall all the ends of the earth, and worship before Thee all the kindreds of the nations.* As the joyful effects of this deliverance were to be extended to the great congregation of God’s people, so, too, we now read that they shall not be confined to any one race, but made to embrace all. *The ends*

of the earth, here put for the remotest nations. These are named as the least likely to be comprehended in the promise, but, of course, without excluding those less distant. As if he had said, the ends of the earth and all that is between them. A.—The Church of Christ, and with it the kingdom of God among men, should extend itself to all corners of the earth, and should take in all sorts of people. Whereas the Jews had long been the only professing people of God, now all the ends of the world should come into the Church, and, the partition-wall being taken down, the Gentiles should be taken in. It is here prophesied that they should be converted ; they shall *remember, and turn to the Lord*. Serious reflection is the first step, and a good step, toward true conversion. We must consider and turn. The prodigal came first to himself, and then to his father. That then they should be admitted into communion with God, and with the assemblies that serve Him : *they shall worship before Thee*. H.

28. *For unto Jehovah is the kingdom, and (He is) governor among the nations.* This will not be a gratuitous extension to the Gentiles of what properly belongs to Israel alone, but a restoration of God’s mercies, after ages of restriction, to their original and proper scope. For Jehovah is not the king of Israel only, but of all mankind. A.—He who by His own power reigns supreme in the domains of creation and providence has set up a kingdom of grace, and by the conquering power of the cross that kingdom will grow until all people shall own its sway and proclaim that “*He is the governor among the nations.*” Amid the tumults and disasters of the present the Lord reigneth ; but in the halcyon days of peace the rich fruit of His dominion will be apparent to every eye. Great Shepherd, let Thy glorious kingdom come. S.

29. The distinction of ranks shall be as little regarded at this feast as that of nations *Eaten and worshipped*, partaken of the sacrificial feast in honor of this great salvation *Fat*, a common Oriental figure for the prosperous and especially the rich. The idea is, that this enjoyment shall be common to the rich and those who are ready to perish, or, as it is expressed in the last clause, *he who cannot keep his soul* (or *himself*) *alive*, a strong expression for the extreme of destitution. He who before, or a little while ago, no longer kept himself alive, but was just about to perish, is now seen kneeling at the sacrificial feast in honor of this great salvation. A.—As if he had said, rich and poor, high and low, the king and the beggar, have

alike need of salvation by Jesus Christ, and must submit unto Him, that they may be saved ; for, as it follows, "*none can keep alive his own soul.*" The captivity of the Jews in Babylon is expressed under those notions of *death*, and of *dwelling in the dust* (Isa. 26 : 19) ; to show how low, that no power but His who can raise the dead could work their deliverance. *Caryl.*

31. They. This new generation, this church which the Lord has planted. **His righteousness** not only as manifested in the deliverance of His righteous servant, but as manifested in all His great work of salvation, both in the suffering and in the exaltation of Christ, and also in providing the feast for all who will partake thereof.

In the latter part of the Psalm—from the words "Thou hast answered me" (v. 21) to the last word, "He hath done it"—the heart lifts itself up on the wings of faith, and the prophet sees visions ever brighter and brighter opening before his gaze. First, he will praise God in the congregation of Israel, and make known His name to his brethren. Then, all nations shall come and sit down at the banquet of fat things, and worship before the Lord. Lastly, to future ages also shall God's righteousness be declared. *P.*

He hath done it, the great deed of righteousness, at the same time a deed of salvation through grace. The great consummating act of mercy and truth was the death and resurrection of the Messiah, the Son of God, who died to make atonement, and rose again as the Righteous One. This transcendent deed is the foundation of salvation ; and accordingly, when Jesus was in the act of accomplishing it, He cried out, "It is finished," with no obscure allusion to this closing sentence. This Psalm is truly the plaint of the sufferer pleading in hope. It takes its flight, especially in these last strains, far above the region of David, the son of Jesse. *M.*

The Psalm opens with the most despairing

cry ever wrung from a troubled soul : "My God, my God, why hast *Thou* forsaken me ?" It pictures the sufferer oppressed with all manner of physical pains and tortures, and set upon by enemies who make a mock of his anguish, and taunt and revile him. All these sorrows meet in Jesus on the cross. Yet in them all He clung to His Father : "*My God, My God !*" was still His cry. And at last that cry was answered in the vision of that feast of redeeming love, to which the high and the low shall be brought together ; of that seed gathered out of all nations to serve and glorify the Lord. For this Christ stands as the High Priest of His people, leading their praises to the God of Israel. *J. P. T.*

I believe that Jesus, the Lord, became in the flesh a sacrificer and a sacrifice for sin ; a satisfaction and price to the justice of God ; a meritor of glory and the kingdom ; a pattern of all righteousness ; a preacher of the Word which Himself was ; a finisher of the ceremonies ; a corner-stone to remove the separation between Jew and Gentile ; an intercessor for the Church ; a lord of nature in His miracles ; a conqueror of death and the power of darkness in His resurrection ; and that He fulfilled the whole counsel of God, performing all His sacred offices and anointing on earth ; accomplished the whole work of the redemption and restitution of man to a state superior to the angels ; whereas the state of man by creation was inferior ; and reconciled and established all things according to the eternal will of the Father. *Bacon.*

The Psalter emptied of Christ would still be a collection of lyric poems of admirable beauty, breathing a pure and lofty devotion, representing in vivid colors the events and persons of the most remarkable people in the world's history. It would retain its position among the noblest and most interesting products of human genius. But to the Christian it would have no voice, no meaning. *Cook.*

PSALM XXIII.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

THE LORD is my shepherd ; I shall not want.

2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures :
He leadeth me beside the still waters.

3 He restoreth my soul :
He guideth me in the paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the
shadow of death,
I will fear no evil ; for thou art with me :

Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

5 Thou preparest a table before me in the
presence of mine enemies :
Thou hast anointed my head with oil ; my
cup runneth over.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life :
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD
for ever.

THERE could not be a finer arrangement than that the Psalm which speaks of a great feast of grace prepared for humanity should now be followed by a Psalm which praises Jehovah as the shepherd and host of His own. D.— This Psalm breathes throughout a spirit of the calmest and most assured trust in God ; it speaks of a peace so deep, a serenity so profound, that even the thought of the shadow of death cannot trouble it. Perhaps there is no Psalm in which the absence of all doubt, misgiving, fear, anxiety, is so remarkable ; and certainly no image could have been devised more beautifully descriptive of rest and safety and trustful happiness than that of the sheep lying down in the deep, rich meadow-grass, beside the living stream, under the care of a tender and watchful shepherd. This feeling of confidence is expressed in three different ways : first, “ I cannot want : ” next, “ I will fear no evil ; ” lastly, “ I will dwell in the house of Jehovah forever. ” On the other hand, God's care for the soul is represented under a twofold image. First, Jehovah is the true shepherd. Next, He is the bountiful host, who exercises princely hospitality toward His guests. It is unnecessary to refer this Psalm to any particular period of David's history. As the outpouring of a heart which has found perfect rest in God, it was most probably written in advanced years, after a long experience of God's goodness. P.

This inimitable ode is the Christian Psalm of life. In it is delineated with exceeding tenderness, pathos, and beauty the spiritual experience of the soul associated with Jehovah by ties of acknowledged dependence and affectionate confidence. Here is a child of God living under the earlier dispensation, at a far advanced stage of an eventful life, succinctly recalling in thank-

ful song the particulars of Jehovah's loving-kindness, through expressions which perfectly apply to believers in all dispensations. B.

This beautiful ode has touched the heart of all ages. Its calm and peaceful strain speaks of a time when David was dwelling in safety after the trials, dangers, and struggles of his early life. It tells of want, but it no longer exists ; of danger, but its terrors are gone ; of enemies, but their day of power is at an end. M.

This is an ode which for beauty of sentiment is not to be matched in the circuit of all literature. In its way down through three thousand years or more, this Psalm has penetrated to the depths of millions of hearts ; it has gladdened homes of destitution and discomfort ; it has whispered hope and joy amid tears to the utterly solitary and forsaken, whose only refuge was in heaven. Beyond all range of probable calculation have these dozen lines imparted a power of endurance under suffering and strength in feebleness, and have kept alive the flickering flame of religious feeling in hearts that were nigh to despair. The Divine element herein embodied has given proof, millions of times repeated, of its reality and of its efficacy, as a *formula* of tranquil trust in God, and of a grateful sense of His *goodness*, which all who do trust in Him may use for themselves, and use it until it has become assimilated to their own habitual fulness. *Isaac Taylor.*

This Psalm, justly admired for its exquisite beauty, its sweet simplicity, and its precious spiritual experiences, bears in every feature the impress of David's hand and no less of David's heart. Through all his early years at home amid flocks and folds, green pastures and quiet waters—familiar with everything pertaining to the care and comfort of his charge, he knew

how to use this comparison to represent the like care and sympathy of his own Jehovah over himself and his fellow-Israelites. As to date, we must place this Psalm in the later years of his life. The goodness and mercy with which God had shielded him from earlier dangers confirmed his faith in God for similar protection through all his future days. C.

The king who had been the shepherd-boy, and had been taken from the quiet sheepcotes to rule over Israel, sings this little Psalm of Him who is the true Shepherd and King of men. We do not know at what period of David's life it was written, but there is a fulness of experience about it, and a tone of subdued, quiet confidence which speaks of a heart mellowed by years, and of a faith made sober by many a trial. A. M.—In the Psalms, more perhaps than in any other part of the Bible, the thoughts of God in nature, and of nature pointing up to God, are emphasized; and David's utterances of this kind are largely the fruit of those early wanderings with his sheep, in green pastures, and by still waters, and through gloomy ravines, in the quick flashing bursts of the Eastern dawn, and under the gleam of the midnight stars. And if that shepherd life had furnished nothing else than the materials for this wonderful pastoral ode, we should all be inclined to say that no period of David's history would have compensated the Church for the loss of his shepherd life. Yet the Psalm is not the utterance of the shepherd days, though it perpetuates their memory. Had it been thus, men might have said that it was but the natural outflowing of a confiding boy's heart, unversed in care or struggle. But this peaceful idyl is a voice out of the maturer life of the Psalmist; out of memories of care and battle and treachery; a voice that tells that peace and rest of heart depend not upon the absence of life's burdens, nor on the presence of nature's tranquilizing scenes, but solely upon the shepherding of God. V.

Its central thought is the close relation between the believer and his God, and this is made vivid by the choice of the one earthly relation which expresses it better than any or all others combined. What the best of human shepherds is to a poor, wayward sheep, that and more is Jehovah to the soul that trusts in Him. And this is the heart of all true experience. It has been greatly illuminated and intensified by the coming of Him who is the Good Shepherd, the great shepherd of the sheep, who knows His own even as the Father knows Him, and who actually laid down His life on

their behalf. But in the earlier dispensation, as well as the later, the consummate flower of religious character was walking with God as one's guide, deliverer, friend and portion. T. W. C.

He is conscious of dependence, but he is above want and fear. He does not ask, he has—he possesses God, and is at rest in Him. He is satisfied with that fruition which blesseth all who hunger for God, and is the highest form of communion with Him. As the present has no longings, the future has no terrors. All the horizon is clear, all the winds are still, the ocean at rest, “and birds of peace sit brooding on the charmed wave.” If there be foes, God holds them back. If there lie far off among the hills any valley of darkness, its black portals cast no gloom over him, and will not when he enters. God is his shepherd, and, by another image, God is his host. The life which in one aspect, by reason of its continual change, and occupation with outward things, may be compared to the journeyings of a flock, is in another aspect, by reason of its inward union with the stability of God, like sitting ever at the table which His hand has spread as for a royal banquet, where the oil of gladness glistens on every head, and the full cup of Divine pleasure is in every hand. For all the outward and pilgrimage aspect, the Psalmist knows that only Goodness and Mercy—these two white-robed messengers of God—will follow his steps, however long may be the term of the days remaining of his life; for all the inward, he is sure that, in calm, unbroken fellowship, he will dwell in the house of God, and that when the twin angels who fed and guided him all his changeable life have finished their charge, and the days of his journeyings are ended, there stretches beyond a still closer union with his heavenly Friend, which will be perfected in His true house “forever.” We look in vain for another example, even in David's Psalms, of such perfect, restful trust in God. These clear notes are perhaps the purest utterance ever given of “the peace of God which passeth all understanding.” A. M.

The Lord is a strong refuge and a high tower, into which we run when our spears are broken and our shields trampled into dust. We think only of ourselves, and our speech is burdened with the enumeration of our wants. But it is far more important that God should have His way with us than that we should have our way with Him. For God knows us infinitely better than we know ourselves, and we shall ask most wisely when we let Him show us His

mind. The twenty-third Psalm is the sweetest of all religious lyrics, because of its discovery that God is the Shepherd of the soul. That not only secures against want; it drives out the very thought of want, so that David has no request to make. The path is always luminous, the table is always a royal banquet, the way is always secure, and even the grave is within the enclosure of the Divine pasturage. *Behrends.*

1. Jehovah (is) my shepherd, I shall not want. This is the general theme or idea of the whole Psalm, that the believer's relation to Jehovah carries with it necessarily the full supply of all his wants. Spiritual gifts are neither excluded nor exclusively intended. The future form, *I shall not want*, includes the present, *I do not want*, with an additional assurance that the provision will be still continued. A. —“*The Lord is my shepherd; I want nothing:*” thus it may be equally well rendered, though in our version it is in the future tense. *Macduff.*

Long before, Jacob had spoken of Him as the “Shepherd of Israel;” but it was reserved for David to bring that sweet and wonderful name into closer relations with the single soul; and, with that peculiar enthusiasm of personal reliance and recognition of God's love to the individual which stamps all his Psalms, to say, “The Lord is *my* shepherd.” These dumb companions of his, in their docility to his guidance and absolute trust in his care, had taught him the secret of peace in helplessness, of patience in ignorance. The green strips of meadow-land where the clear waters brought life, the wearied flocks sheltered from the mid day heat, the quiet course of the little stream, the refreshment of the sheep by rest and pasture, the smooth paths which he tried to choose for them, the rocky defiles through which they had to pass, the rod in his hand that guided, and chastised, and defended, and was never lifted in anger—all these, the familiar sights of his youth, pass before us as we read; and to us, too, in our widely different social state, have become the undying emblems of the highest care and the wisest love. A. M.

This poem is impregnated with one feeling—the feeling of trust in God. The illustration of this trust is taken from pastoral life. The case of the Oriental shepherd and the trustfulness of the sheep furnish a symbol to David of the mutual relations between himself and God. In the first verse we find two of the activities of faith: it appropriates God, “The Lord is *my* shepherd.” It sees the invisible in the visible. The scenery and life which moved round

David was merely scenery and life, and no more; to him the whole was a parable of which God was the interpretation. The veil of the phenomenal was lifted up, and he beheld the spiritual. *Brooke.*

The Psalm centres in this thought of God as a shepherd. All its ideas and images spring from this, and group themselves round it. Hence the key-note of the whole song is, *God's servant finds his all in God.* He wants nothing. Here is the eternal, vital truth that man lives by God and not by His gifts. This being true, it follows that the true end of every man's life is to become one of God's flock. V.

I shall not want. Or, “I cannot want,” as describing not only the present experience, but as expressing confidence for all time to come. These words are the key-note of the Psalm. David speaks them out of the fulness of his own experience. As he had watched over, provided for, and tended his flock, leading them to the greenest pastures, and finding for them the water which in that country was so scarce, and guarding them by night from beasts of prey, so he felt his God would provide for and watch over him. P.—He who has Jehovah, the possessor of all things, has everything; he does not lack whatever is good in itself and would be good for him.

“I shall not want”—for food, for drink, for grace and beauty, for quietness, for companionship, for guidance, for a welcome back again when I have wandered. Want is the excess of the desire beyond the possession. But he whose heart is right with God, as David's was, will not desire what it is not in God's providence that he shall possess. J. V.—In David's way of putting it, *the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.* In Paul's way of putting it, it is, *My God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.* *Bishop Thorold.*

2. He . . . me. What, without exaggeration, may be called a personal friendship is established between the Lord and each of His disciples. He comes in among them, sees them one by one, and has personal communication with each suitable to Himself and unknown to all the rest, calling Him by His own name, and expressing a personal love in the calling. A. R.—He has a clear individualizing knowledge of each; each separately has a place in His mind or heart. To each He says, “I know thee by name.” He loves the world, because He loves every single soul with a distinct love. And His messages of blessing are as specific and individualizing as the love from which they

come. He speaks to each of us as truly as when His voice from heaven said, "Saul, Saul." English names are on His lips as really as Jewish ones. He calls to *thee* by *thy* name—thou hast a share in His love. A. M.

He calls that He may lead. He utters the name that he, that she who answers to it may, at the thrilling word, arise and follow Him whithersoever He goeth. "He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out"—"out," of course, from the whole natural sinful life, from all its darkness and misery, into the light and joy of acceptance; "out" of infantine feebleness into manly strength; "out" of narrow views into wider; "out" of first experiences into more matured; "out" of mistakes and disappointments into wiser ways and better fortunes; "out" of dreamy indolence into those activities by which alone it can be escaped; "out" of overstrained activity into some quiet hour or time of "refreshing from the presence of the Lord;" "out" of besetting sin into waiting duty; sometimes "out" of safety into perils which lie on the way to a higher safety; and so on and on in a movement which cannot cease until at length, in His own time and way, it will be "out" of earth into heaven. A. R.

To lie down in green pastures.

What are these "*green pastures*" but the Scriptures of truth—always fresh, always rich, and never exhausted? Sweet and full are the doctrines of the Gospel; fit food for souls, as tender grass is natural nutriment for sheep. When by faith we are enabled to find rest in the promises, we are like the sheep that lie down in the midst of the pasture; we find at the same moment both provender and peace, rest and refreshment, serenity and satisfaction. S.—Here are many pastures, and every pasture rich, so that it can never be eaten bare; here are many streams, and every stream so deep and wide that it can never be drawn dry. The sheep have been eating in these pastures ever since Christ had a church on earth, and yet they are as full of grass as ever. The sheep have been drinking at these streams ever since Adam, and yet they are brim full to this very day, and they will so continue till the sheep are above the use of them in heaven! *Ralph Robinson.*

With guidance to "*green pastures*," the Psalmist has, with good reason, associated guardianship beside "*still waters*:" for as we can only appropriate the Word through the Spirit, so we shall ordinarily receive the Spirit through the Word; not indeed only by hearing it, not only by reading it, not only by reflecting upon

it. But the effect of His coming will ever be the realization of some promise, the recognition of some principle, the attainment of some grace, the understanding of some mystery, which is already in the Word, and which we shall thus find, with a deeper impression and with a fuller development, brought home with power to the heart. *T. Dale.*

Lie down. A godly life, if it be healthful, must be both an active and a contemplative life. In this age we are so constantly urged to active life that we are in some danger of losing sight of the claims of the contemplative life. While it is true that no life is more unhealthful and more fruitful in evil of some kinds than the life of the cloister—the life of pure contemplation as it is styled—it is equally true that the life of pure activity without contemplation is also unhealthful. If the one tends to paralysis, the other tends to fever. There are times when a man needs to lie still, like the earth under the spring rain, letting the lessons of experience and the memories of the Word of God sink down to the very roots of his life, and fill the deep reservoirs of his soul. Those are not always lost days when his hands are not busy, any more than rainy days in summer are lost, because they keep the farmer indoors. They are growing days; and for this side of the godly man's life the great Shepherd provides in His green pastures, He makes His servant to *lie down* there. There are times when men say they are too busy to stop; when they think they are doing God's service by going on. Now and then God *makes* such an one lie down; and then the active, bustling man learns the much-needed lesson of rest in the Lord, and of waiting patiently for Him, because he can do nothing else but rest. Many a man has had to thank God for some enforced season of rest, in which he first learned the sweetness of meditation on the Word, and of lying still in God's hands and waiting God's pleasure. V.

Still waters. *By waters of rest* we are not to understand *still* or *quiet waters*, a sense which the Hebrew word has nowhere else, and which would here suggest the idea of stagnation, or at least that of silence, which is far less agreeable than that of an audible flow. The idea really conveyed is that of waters by or at which rest may be enjoyed. The repose is not that of the waters themselves, but of the flocks reclining near them. A.

The Psalm puts the rest and refreshment *first*, as being the most marked characteristic of God's dealings. After all, it is so. The years are years of unbroken continuity of out-

ward blessings. The reign of afflictions is ordinarily measured by days. Weeping endures for a night. But outward blessings are precious chiefly as emblems of the better spiritual gifts; and it is not an accommodation of his words, but is the appreciation of their truest spirit, when we look upon them, as the instinct of devout hearts has ever done, as expressing both God's gift of temporal mercies and His gift of spiritual good, of which higher gift all the lower are meant to be significant and symbolic. Thus regarded, the image describes the sweet rest of the soul in communion with God, in whom alone the hungry heart finds food that satisfies, and from whom alone the thirsty soul drinks draughts deep and limpid enough. A. M.

3. *My soul He will restore; He will lead me in paths of right* (or rectitude) *for His name's sake.* To restore the soul, here as in Psalm 19: 7, is to vivify or quicken the exhausted spirit. *Paths of right* may either mean *right paths*, as opposed to those which are devious and dangerous, or *paths of righteousness*, not man's but God's, not ways of upright conduct on the Psalmist's part, but ways of faithfulness on God's part. The righteousness of God, so often appealed to by the ancient saints, includes His covenanted mercy, the exercise of which, according to His promise, was ensured by His essential rectitude. A.—First is intimated the believer's liability to fall, or deviate even within the fold of the Church, else wherefore should he need to be "*restored*"? Next is declared the promptitude of the Good Shepherd to interpose for his rescue. "*He restoreth my soul.*" Then Christ's subsequent care to "*lead him in the paths of righteousness;*" and lastly, the reason assigned wherefore He will do this—resolving all into the spontaneousness, the supremacy, the omnipotence of grace. He will do all "*for His own name's sake.*" T. Dale.

Consider what is true of any real disciple, who is straying from Christ—viz., that his Holy Shepherd, folding the flock and caring for it as a shepherd should, does not let him go, or take it only as a fact that the flock is diminished by one, not caring by what one. He knows what one it is, and, if the wanderer will listen, he may hear the shepherd calling his name. The love of Christ, as we have seen, is personal and particular, and He watches for His flock with a directly personal care. Do not imagine, then, if you consciously begin to fall off, or stray, that you are no longer cared for by the Shepherd. Christ follows you with His personal and particular love, and will not let you go. That

same tenderness which melted the heart of an apostle, when he said, "who loved me and gave Himself for me," pursues you still. It is faithful, patient, forgiving, and true; it waits and lingers, it whispers and calls, saying, "Will ye also go away?" holding on upon you by a personal and persistent love, that will not be content till you are gathered back into the fold, to be, as before, a follower. Bushnell.

God's children could tell of very various methods by which He restores souls. Very often it is by thorns planted just outside the hurdles, for this very end, that the sheep may feel their hard points and be glad to run back. All afflictions are restorative processes, and very few indeed retrace their steps without afflictions. Some are brought back by the Word. Or an inward voice will do it, as Elijah found, it in the desert. When the whole map is laid out, you will be astonished to see how providence worked with grace, and grace worked with providence, all ranging to one end—to correct your strayings, and bring you at last safe home. J. V.

Of all the phases of restoration it is to be observed that they are *radical*: they act upon the springs of the life. "He restoreth my soul—my life." Is it forgiveness? He puts "a new heart" into man. Is it refreshment? Its fountain-head is rest of heart. Is it consolation? His words go deeper than the cold conventionalities of men; they bring the abiding peace of settled trust in fatherly love, and of the vision of eternal joy. And in the man once restored, God shows forth His own righteousness. He makes him a partaker of the Divine nature. He does more than bring him back to the fold; his restoration is only the beginning of the Divine manhood in him. Nor does God set Himself to develop some single virtue merely. He leads him not in one path, but in *paths* of righteousness. The new character permeates the man's whole being, and all this is for His name's sake; "that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." V.

He keeps and leads us on in that way into which He hath brought us; He leaves us not again to try our own skill, if we can walk to heaven alone, being set into the path of it; but He still conducts us in it by His own hand, and that is the cause of our persisting in it and attaining the blessed end of it. L.—The soul thus restored is then led on another stage; "*He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake*"—that is to say, God guides us into work. Life is not a fold for the sheep to

lie down in, but a road for them to walk on. All our blessings of every sort are indeed given us for our delight. But, then, when joy fills the heart and life is bounding in the veins, we have to learn that these are granted not for pleasure only, but for pleasure in order to power. Rest is to fit for work, work is to sweeten rest. All this is emphatically true of the spiritual life. Its seasons of communion, its hours on the mount are to prepare for the sore sad work in the plain; and he is not the wisest disciple who tries to make the Mount of Transfiguration the abiding place for himself and his Lord. It is not well that our chief object should be to enjoy the consolations of religion; it is better to seek first to do the duties enjoined by religion. The basis of obedience is the sense of salvation. We work not *for* the assurance of acceptance and forgiveness, but *from* it. First the restored soul, then the paths of righteousness for *His* name's sake who has restored me, and restored me that I may be like Him. A. M.

4. *Shadow of death* conveys more than the original, and fails to reproduce its compound form. The effect is heightened by the mention of a valley, as a deep place, often overhung with woods, and naturally darker than a plain or mountain. There may be some allusion to the dread of darkness on the part of sheep and other timid animals. The rod and the staff are mentioned as badges of the shepherd and as tokens of His presence. A. —The shepherd invariably carries a staff or rod with him when he goes forth to feed his flock. It is often bent or hooked at one end, which gave rise to the shepherd's crook in the hand of the Christian bishop. With this staff he rules and guides the flock to their green pastures, and defends them from their enemies. This staff is associated as inseparably with the shepherd as the goad is with the ploughman. W. M. Thompson. —The Palestine shepherd bears about with him a "club" and a "staff," two entirely different instruments, with distinct and special uses, but both employed in caring for the sheep. The club, in Arabic *naboot*, is used to protect himself and his charge from assailants. It is about two feet long, and often has a large number of heavy iron nails driven into its rounded head. It may often be seen hanging from the shepherd's girdle during the daytime, but at night he carries it in his hand. He also carries a long shepherd's staff, called *assayah*. In general it is simply a straight, strong rod. Its use answers to our shepherd's crook, to guide the sheep, to rescue them from danger, to rule the

stragglers into order, and at times to chastise the wilful. Neil.

With the fourth verse we pass into another scene. The recollections of the natural scenery amid which David fed his sheep give coloring to the Psalm and shape its imagery. Often his wanderings had brought him to one of those gloomy ravines which penetrate the cliffs overhanging the Dead Sea: places beset with dangers; for here the robber made his haunt, and the beast of prey lurked. In the figurative meaning of these words, the Psalmist's reference was not primarily to death. A "valley of death" or of "death-darkness" was simply a very dark and gloomy valley; but the Church in all ages has delighted to find, as it rightfully may, an allusion to the last and sorest strait of the believer—the agony of death; and these words have been quoted by more dying lips than any ten texts of Scripture together. We need not therefore try to divert the thought from this familiar channel. Here where he most needs Him, God's child finds the shepherd with His rod and staff. V.

Valley of death-shade. The Hebrew term applies to any scenes of great darkness, distress, trial, peril. We need not exclude these scenes which are wont to precede death, nor need we exclude many other scenes in which death is not near nor even to be seriously apprehended. Probably David had in his mind those years of peril in which, hunted by Saul and fleeing before him, his life-path lay through a valley of darkness almost like that of the grave itself. Yet even so, he says, "I am ever within the touch of my Shepherd's crook, and I can feel it guiding my steps through this darkness dense as the shadow of death." This seems to be the precise conception here—strictly pastoral, in harmony with the scope of the entire Psalm. The precious sentiment here is that in the midst of whatever danger, darkness, perplexity; though all other hopes and helpers should fail, yet God is the strength of his heart—his comfort, his joy, his sure salvation. C.

The "valley of the shadow of death" means any and every gloomy valley of weeping through which we have to pass. Such sunless gorges we have all to traverse at some time or other. It is striking that the Psalmist puts the sorrow, which is as certainly characteristic of our lot as the rest or the work, into the future. Looking back he sees none. Memory has softened down all the past into one uniform tone, as the mellowing distance wraps in one solemn purple the mountains which, when close to them, have many a barren rock and gloomy rift. All be-

hind is good. And, building on this hope, he looks forward with calmness, and feels that no evil shall befall. So to the Christian heart there may be the conviction that sorrow when it comes will not be evil, because God will be with us; and the conviction that the hand which guides us into the dark valley will guide us through it and up out of it. Yes, strange as it may sound, the presence of Him who sends the sorrow is the best help to bear it. The assurance that the hand which strikes is the hand which binds up makes the stroke a blessing, and turns the rod which smites into the staff to lean on. A. M.

Comfort me. The Hebrew word means far more than simply to console. It signifies to tone up the whole nature, to *strengthen* a man so that all his energy can be brought to bear. If anywhere he needs comfort in this sense, it is in the valley of the shadow; and so God comforts him first with His *rod*, the instrument of correction. Aye, *comforts* him with the *rod*: for the very afflictions and pains which wait about the entrance to the valley are God's messengers and instruments of perfection to make him meet for a better inheritance. And, then, when the rod has done its work, the staff is given. When the pilgrim's knees begin to totter, then come "the everlasting arms," and the strong staff makes firm his step, and naught can shake his foothold until he passes out of the shadow into the light of heaven. V.

It is not "the valley of death," but "the valley of the shadow of death," for death in its substance has been removed, and only the shadow of it remains. Some one has said that when there is a shadow there must be light somewhere, and so there is. Death stands by the side of the highway in which we have to travel, and the light of heaven shining upon him throws a shadow across our path; let us then rejoice that there is a light beyond. S.—Death itself to God's people is but a *walk* in this valley, a gentle, pleasant walk; the wicked are chased out of the world, and their souls are required; but the saints take a walk to another world as cheerfully as they take their leave of this. It is a walk *through* it; they shall not be lost in this valley, but get safe to the mountain of spices on the other side of it. II.—Christ's victory over death is His people's. "At that moment I am with you," whispers Christ; "the same arm you have proved strong and faithful all the way up through the wilderness, which has never failed, though you have been often forced to lean on it all your weakness." "On this arm," an-

swers the believer, "*I feel at home*; with soul-confidence I repose on my Beloved, for He has supported through so many difficulties from the contemplation of which I shuddered. He has carried over so many depths, that I know His arm to be the arm of love." *Powerscourt.*

The Syrian sheep does not follow its shepherd by fits and starts; seeking to be near him only when the wolf is prowling, or when the dog is on its track; when the night shadows are falling, or the pasture is diminishing. It is generally found close to its protector and guide. It is an undeviating, trustful companionship, in sunshine and storm, in fulness and in drought, in summer and winter. So it is, or ought to be, with the believer—a constant, consistent, habitual following of his Lord, seeking ever to have a realizing sense of His nearness. Not merely when trouble is nigh; in the hour of affliction and sad calamity, or of impending death; but in the midst of life's joyous sunshine, when verdure is on the mountain side, when the rills are singing their way down to the lower valley, and the tinkling bells, answering from fold to fold, tell of nothing but peace, and safety, and repose. *Macduff.*

No pain that aches for immortal purity can be dreadful. No grief that strengthens your aspiration for triumph over sin, and the holiness of Christ's heart, can be a calamity. Over no falling tears and heaving sighs that wash your affections white, and put temptation under your feet, and throw open a clear and fearless communion with God, can you ever exclaim, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, these would not have befallen me;" but rather, "Be these my perpetual, solemn guests, if thereby, in this Thy inward presence, and with these immortal gifts, Thou, my Lord, mayest be led to draw nigh, and come to me!" Immortal gifts! "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith." There is no one of us, not the weakest, not the timidest, that may not pass through the furnace of trial, and under the shadows of death, with the song of that triumph on his lips. Not by scaffolds, not through blood, but by silent martyrdoms, by slow sufferings, as sharp sometimes and needing the heroism of patience more, must faithful spirits still walk toward God, their hands in their Master's, "Thy rod and Thy staff comforting." F. D. H.

In this Valley of Humiliation our Lord formerly had His country-house. He loved much to be here. He loved also to walk these meadows, for He found the air was pleasant. This

is a valley that nobody walks in but those that love a pilgrim's life. And though Christian had the hard hap to meet here with Apollyon, and to enter with him a brisk encounter, yet I must tell you that in former times men have met with angels here, have found pearls here, and have in this place found the words of life. "Then said Mercy, I think I am as well in this valley as I have been anywhere else in all our journey. The place, methinks, suits with my spirit." *Bunyan.*

5. The figure of the shepherd has faded away, and that of the host makes its appearance. His enemies must look on without being able to offer any opposition, and see how sumptuously Jehovah provides for His guest, how He anoints him with sweet perfumes as at a joyous, magnificent feast, and fills his cup even to overflowing. D.—David changes the image of himself as a sheep into that of a guest. The Psalm rises in thought and feeling from preservation in the midst of trouble to the possession of abounding joy. The idea of the valley of the shadow of death melts into a picture of Oriental plenty. *Stoughton.*

My cup runneth over. He had not only a fulness of *abundance*, but of *redundance*. Those that have this happiness must carry their cup upright, and see that it overflow into their poor brethren's emptier vessels. *Trapp.*—Wherefore doth the Lord make your cup run over, but that other men's lips might taste the liquor? The showers that fall upon the highest mountains should glide into the lowest valleys. "Give, and it shall be given you," is a maxim little believed. *W. Secker.*

The mercy is more strikingly portrayed as being granted *in warfare*. Life is a sore fight, but to the Christian man, in spite of all the tumult, life is a festal table. This is our condition—always the foe, always the table. A. M. —The whole of the twenty-third Psalm is essentially spiritual, and David's prepared table was certainly a holy one. And to this every child of God will set his seal and add his witness, that God does most surely and most strangely provide spiritual food for us, just what and when and where we need. There is another table yet to be, when a prepared people shall meet at a prepared banquet, and the appointed ones gather round their appointed King. J. V.

6. The Psalm is a series of pictures of a believer's life and confidences, and after "the valley of the shadow of death" come the prepared table, and the anointed head, and the mantling cup, and goodness and mercy following to the

end, and then the death, or rather no death at all, for it is leapt over, or left out as almost a thing which is not. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life;" and then, without one break, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

The Hebrew word translated "surely" more often means *only*, *i.e.*, goodness and mercy *only*—nothing else—will follow me. The translation would be more accurate grammatically if read: "Goodness and mercy *will* follow me all the days of my life, and I *shall* dwell in the house of the Lord forever." He does not think of coercing, forcing, the manifestations of goodness and mercy, nor should the word "will" be made emphatic. A simple future is all he aims to express. C.—There is no ground in this last verse of the Psalm for distinguishing between *shall* and *will* and using them according to modern fashion, as though the goodness and mercy were to follow as matter of necessity, or as though David here professed an act of choice. He appears to be dwelling upon his future privileges and blessed hopes rather than his own resolutions; upon the objects of his desire rather than the determination of his will. *Stoughton.*

Dwelling in the house of Jehovah does not mean frequenting His sanctuary, but being a member of His household and an inmate of His family, enjoying His protection, holding communion with Him, and subsisting on His bounty. A.

The last verse combines the retrospect and the prospect of faith. David glances over his whole life, and declares that it has been very good: "Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life." That is the expression, not of a youthful shepherd's, but of a man's experience, and it is an expression of triumphant faith. *Brooke.*—The sense of trustfulness becomes more positive as the Psalm proceeds, until, in the last verse, it culminates in an exultant outburst of assurance as respects the writer's future lot. The future is no less secure than the present. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." And note that the basis of this assurance is not the fact that God has allotted him his place in green pastures, but in the fact that the Lord is his Shepherd. He clearly perceives that it may be God's pleasure to change this happy lot and to direct his course into the gloomy valley of the shadow; but the goodness and the lovingkindness shall none the less be his. Goodness and mercy do not mean to God's child flowering meads and wells of refreshment only;

they may equally mean rocky defiles, and rough paths, and darkness, and enemies. When Paul promises the Corinthians all things in Christ, he couples, in the most natural and matter-of-course way, death and things to come, with life and things present, treating them all alike as God's good gifts. It is all one so long as they are Christ's. Goodness and lovingkindness, now and evermore, are represented to David simply by those five words—*The Lord is my Shepherd*. Darkness, roughness, hostility, will be goodness and mercy still, so long as they shall not separate him from his Shepherd's society, guidance, and comfort. A. M.

Goodness and mercy follow him always, *all the days of his life*, the black days as well as the bright days, the days of fasting as well as the days of feasting, the dreary days of winter as well as the bright days of summer. Goodness supplies our needs, and mercy blots out our sins. S. —“All the days of my life.” Life is made up not so much of years as of days. Goodness and mercy have been our companions through past days. Their hands held us up in childhood; they have been the guardians of our youth; they have been ministering angels in our manhood; they have been a refuge and strength in old age. Goodness and mercy are our companions to-day. To-day we walk with them and talk with them; to-day we receive their benediction. And to-morrow goodness and mercy will accompany us. There is nothing in any day or days of life to separate us from goodness and mercy. The day is not too long, not too dark, not too stormy, the days are not too many, for these Divine companions. S. Martin.

These two angels of God—Goodness and Mercy—shall follow and encamp around the pilgrim. The enemies whom God held back while he feasted may pursue, but will not overtake him. They will be distanced sooner or later; but the white wings of these messengers of the covenant shall never be far away from the journeying child, and the air shall often be filled with the music of their comings, and their celestial weapons shall glance around him in all the fight, and their soft arms shall bear him up over all the rough ways, and up higher at last to the throne. So much for the earthly future. But higher than all that rises the confidence of the closing words, “*I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*” This should be at once the crown of all our hopes for the future, and the one great lesson taught us by all the vicissitudes of life. The sorrows and the joys, the journeying and the rest, the temporary

repose and the frequent struggles—all these should make us *sure* that there is an end which will interpret them all, to which they all point, for which they may all prepare. God provides for us here in the presence of our enemies; it is wilderness food we get, manna from heaven, and water from the rock. We eat in haste, staff in hand, and standing round the meal. But yonder we sit down with the Shepherd, the Master of the house, at His table in His kingdom. We put off the pilgrim dress, and put on the royal robe; we lay aside the sword, and clasp the palm. Far off, and lost to sight, are all the enemies. We fear no change. We go no more out. A. M.

All His sweeter mercies and sharper corrections are to make me *partaker of His holiness*, and lead me to glory in the way in which my Saviour and all His saints have gone before me. *All things work together for the best* to me, by preparing me for that which is best indeed. Both calms and storms are to bring me to this harbor; if I take them but for themselves and for this present life, I mistake them, unthankfully vilify them, and lose their end, life, and sweetness. Every word and work of God, every day's mercies and changes, look at heaven, and intend eternity. God leads me no other way; if I follow Him not, I forsake my hope in forsaking Him; if I follow Him, shall I be unwilling to be at home, and arrive at the end of all this way? Baxter.

In conclusion, think of the grand home-gathering in the house of the Lord! “I beheld, and, lo! a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb.” There is the destination of the pilgrim Church. There is the home and resting-place of all pious souls since the world began—of the vast procession of the saints of God, increasing in number from age to age. “Before the Throne”—in the immediate presence of God; “before the Lamb”—in the immediate presence of Christ. Stoughton.—The resting place of the pilgrim is the eternal temple. To dwell in the temple of God, to go no more out—that is the highest strain of the Christian hope. W. B. Pope.

This Psalm and the tenth chapter of John form two links in a chain which finds its completing link in the seventh chapter of Revelation —“Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple, and He that sitteth on the throne shall spread His habitation over them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither

shall the sun ever light upon them, no, nor any heat ; because the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall shepherd them, and shall guide them to the fountains of the waters of life ; and God shall wipe away every tear out of their eyes." V.

PSALM XXIV.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

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| <p>1 THE earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof ;
The world, and they that dwell therein.</p> <p>2 For he hath founded it upon the seas,
And established it upon the floods.</p> <p>3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD ?
And who shall stand in his holy place ?</p> <p>4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart ;
Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity.
And hath not sworn deceitfully.</p> <p>5 He shall receive a blessing from the LORD,
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.</p> | <p>6 This is the generation of them that seek after him,
That seek thy face, O <i>God of Jacob</i>. [Selah]</p> <p>7 Lift up your heads, O ye gates ;
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors :
And the King of glory shall come in.</p> <p>8 Who is the King of glory ?
The LORD strong and mighty,
The LORD mighty in battle.</p> <p>9 Lift up your heads, O ye gates ;
Yea, lift them up, ye everlasting doors :
And the King of glory shall come in.</p> <p>10 Who is this King of glory ?
The LORD of hosts,
He is the King of glory. [Selah]</p> |
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THIS grand choral hymn was in all probability composed and sung on the occasion of the removal of the ark from the house of Obed-Edom to the city of David on Mount Zion (2 Sam. 6). It was a day of solemn gladness and triumph. No long period had elapsed since David had wrested the stronghold of Zion from the last remnant of the hill-tribes of the Canaanites which lingered in Palestine. Henceforth this mountain-city, deemed by its ancient inhabitants impregnable, was selected by the conqueror as the seat of the royal residence, and the centre of religious worship ; and thither, after having subdued his enemies, he determined to bring the ark, which for nearly fifty years had been left neglected at Kirjath-Jearim. It is difficult for us to conceive the feelings, at once of the most exalted and fervent patriotism and of the deepest religious enthusiasm, which would be awakened in the hearts of the people by such an event. The land was now indeed their own land ; the king of their choice reigned over them ; the most sacred emblem of Jehovah's presence and blessing was to be fixed in a central and permanent abode. King and priests and people, the elders of Israel and the captains over thousands (1 Chr. 15 : 2), in sol-

emn procession, and with all the accompaniments of music and song, conducted the ark to its resting-place on the holy mountain. It was then that this majestic anthem rose to heaven : " Jehovah's is the earth, and the fulness thereof ;" and the gates of that gray old fortress were bid to lift themselves up, as being too narrow to admit the King of glory. P.

This Psalm consists of two distinct and, it may seem at first sight, unconnected parts. The first praises God as the universal sovereign by right of creation (vs. 1, 2), and describes the moral requisites to intimate communion with Him (vs. 3-6). The second represents Him, in a striking figurative form, as entering some place provided for His residence (vs. 7-10). The idea common to both parts is the supremacy of God, both in holiness and majesty. A.—In each we have question and answer, as in Psalm 15, which belongs to the same period. The first half replies to the question, " Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in His holy place ?" The answer is a description of the *men who dwell with God*. The second half deals with the correlative inquiry, " Who is the King of glory ?" and describes the *God who comes to dwell with men*. Both portions are

united by a real internal connection, in that they set forth the mutual approach of God and man which leads to communion. A. M.

Adopted into Israel's hymn-book, this Psalm became an Old Testament advent hymn in honor of the Lord, who should come to His temple (Mal. 3:1); and the cry, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates," acquired essentially the same meaning as the voice of the herald in Isa. 40:3: "Prepare ye Jehovah's way, make level in the desert a highway for our God." In the New Testament consciousness, the place of the first advent is taken by the second, the coming of the Lord of glory to His Church, which is His spiritual temple, and which is called upon in this Psalm to prepare a worthy reception for Him. D.—Most fitly, in its Christian application, this Psalm celebrates the return of Christ as the King of glory to His heavenly throne, and the inauguration of that dominion which He thence exercises in the world. It will be fully accomplished when the doors of all hearts, all temples, and all kingdoms shall be thrown wide before Him; when He shall be acknowledged upon earth as He is acknowledged in heaven. P.

1. The earth is the Lord's by the sovereign right of Creatorship, the right to a thing which we intuitively recognize as resting in him that made it. This right covers the earth and all that fills it; the inhabited world and all that dwell therein. The Hebrew for "world" means the earth considered as productive and inhabited, the fitting abode of man. C.

2. *For He above the seas has settled it, and above the streams has fixed it.* The pronoun is emphatic; He and no one else. He has made the earth what it is, and is therefore the sovereign, both of it and its inhabitants. The idea is not that of subterraneous waters bearing up the land, but simply that of the habitable earth, raised above the surface of the waters which surround it. The sense of the two verses, taken in connection, is that since Jehovah is the God who collected the waters and caused the dry land to appear, He is the rightful sovereign of the habitable earth and of those whom it sustains. A.—He is the owner of the world, because its creator. He has founded it upon seas, *i.e.*, the ocean and its floods; for the waters were before the dry land was created, and the latter emerged from them at God's omnipotent word. D.

All the parts and regions of the earth are the Lord's, all under His eye, all in His hand; so that, wherever a child of God goes, he may comfort himself with this, that he does not go

off his Father's ground. That which falls to our share of the earth and its productions is but lent to us, it is the Lord's; what is our own against all the world is not so against His claims. H.—Under man's tutored hand the world is coming to a greater fulness than ever, but it is all the Lord's; the field and the fruit, the earth and all earth's wonders are Jehovah's. We look also for a sublimer fulness when the true ideal of a world for God shall have been reached in millennial glories, and then most clearly the earth will be the Lord's and the fulness thereof. S.

3-6. David takes the occasion of the inauguration of the tabernacle on Mount Zion to inculcate the fundamental principles of morality, above all, *purity of heart*, as the conditions of acceptance. Cook.

3, 4. Heaven is God and God is heaven. How can a soul possess God, and find its heaven in possessing Him? Certainly only by likeness to Him, and loving Him. The old question, "Who shall stand in the holy place?" has no answer in the Gospel, which reduces the conditions, or negatives the old reply. The common sense of every conscience answers, and Christianity answers, as the Psalmist does, "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart." A. M.—It is not stately walls nor beauteous spires that tell for Christ, nor eloquent sermons, nor artistic anthems, but lives that are clean, hearts that are glad with the light of Christ, and hands that are loaded with mercy. Anon.

4. The true worshipper of Christ must possess a moral fitness. There must be: 1. *Rectitude of conduct.* "He that hath clean hands." The ceremonially unclean were not allowed to touch the sacred things of the Temple, and certainly the morally impure, whose hands are defiled with wrong-doing, cannot enter into hallowed fellowship with God. The conscience that is not upright in the practical, commonplace duties of life cannot be sincere and blameless in the solemn worship of God. 2. *Purity of heart.* "And a pure heart." It is not enough for the outward life to be consistent, the inward experience must be holy. The inner life is everything to us; if we are wrong there, we are wrong everywhere and in everything. There is a moral sympathy between the worshipper and the worshipped, and the tendency is to become increasingly like the object of our adoration. The holy God can accept nothing but what is the offering of a holy heart. Hence the perpetual need of the sanctifying merits of the great Mediator; without His aid the best effort of the worshipper is imperfect and impure. 3.

Truthfulness of thought and speech. "Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity." "Unto vanity, *i.e.*, either the perishing things of earth or falsehood, which signification passes over into a wider one of moral evil in general; or false gods, idols. It may be taken here in the widest sense of all that the human heart puts in the place of God." P.—The word "vanity" is used for things vain and empty; also for things false and for idols; and is perhaps used comprehensively for sin. The man described here, therefore, is he who has not given his heart in love to any sin. C.—"Nor sworn deceitfully;" or inured his tongue to any dishonoring of God, or deceiving of others. Perjury is here instanced for the rest, as one of the most heinous. But Peraldus reckoneth up four and-twenty several sins of the tongue, all which every burgess of the New Jerusalem is careful to avoid, as no way becoming his pure lip. Trapp.

Accepted worshippers are such as make conscience of being inwardly as good as they seem to be outwardly; they have pure hearts. We make nothing of our religion if we do not make heart-work of it. This is a pure heart which is sincere and without guile in covenanting with God, which is carefully guarded, which is purified by faith and conformed to the image and will of God. They are such as do not set their affections upon the things of this world; as do not lift up their souls unto vanity, whose hearts are not carried out inordinately toward the wealth of the world, the praise of men, or the delights of sense; who do not choose these things for their portion. They are such as deal honestly both with God and man. In their covenant with God and their contracts with men they have not sworn deceitfully, nor broken their promises, violated their engagements. Those that have no regard to the obligations of truth or the honor of God's name are unfit for a place in God's holy hill. H.

An honest, earnest, true heart; a hand that will not stain itself with unjust gain, or hold an unequal balance, or sign a deceitful letter; a tongue that will not twist itself to a falsehood or take up an evil report; a soul that points as true as a compass to highest ideal of manhood or womanhood—these are the marks and qualities of God's people everywhere. And when these qualities are exalted and manifested, when a Christian means one whose word is his bond, who can be trusted with unknown treasure, whose praise is an honor and whose friendship is a jewel of priceless value; one who does his duty toward his fellow-men as a service to his

God; one whose outward integrity is the proof of his inward purity—then the Church will have great praise and large triumph. H. Van Dyke.

A Christian that is evangelically "perfect" is made up of these two parts—*holiness* and *righteousness*; though holiness be the chief, as that which doth difference the saint, yet righteousness is so requisite that there can be no true Christian without it. The saint is described sometimes by a "pure heart," so also sometimes by "clean hands," because he has both; the holiness of his heart is seen at his fingers' ends. Swinnock.—It is not he who fasts or watches so many days, nor he who divides his own among the poor, nor he who preaches to others, nor he who lives quietly, kindly, and friendly; nor, in fine, is it he who works all virtuous and all good works that ever any man spoke or read of, but it is he alone who is pure within and without. Luther.

God will be served with the *whole heart*; for all our good is in God, and therefore all our hearts must make out after God. God must have perfect obedience in the desire and endeavor, or else He will have none. Certainly that which must make any man acceptable is not so much that there is somewhat done, but that that which God commands is done, or done in regard of the endeavor; for that indeed will be acceptable; though we cannot do all at once, if we bring somewhat to God as a part, and acknowledging the whole debt, work for the remainder, it will be accepted. If thou hast an upright heart, and dost bring God but part and labor after the whole, He will accept it; but if thou bringst Him ten times more than a sincere heart can bring Him, it will not be acceptable. Burroughs.—Christ could not, if He would, take a man to His right hand whose heart was not the home of simple trust and thankful love, whose nature and desires were unprepared for that blessed world. A. M.

How greatly they err who consider the old economy as nothing but a burdensome ritual, a round of ceremonies, never penetrating beneath the surface! Here, in the praise-book of the nation, in the songs of the sanctuary, is incorporated an utterance that passes by altar, and sacrifice, and incense, and makes no mention of ancestral names however great or sacred, and insists simply upon purity of heart and conduct as the prerequisites for acceptable worship. T. W. C.

5. "He shall *receive* the blessing from Jehovah, and righteousness from the God of his salvation." Then that righteousness, which he who honestly attempts to comply with such requirements will soon find that he does not pos-

ness, is to be received from above, not elaborated from within; is a gift from God, not a product of man's toils. God will make us pure, that we may dwell with Him. A. M.—To receive righteousness is to have the gift of righteousness, grace to resemble God in His essential attributes, and conformity to the Divine will and the Divine nature. It also includes the substantial fact of justification, for such a man has righteousness imputed to him. It is a phrase of great importance in its bearings upon the doctrinal teaching of the Psalms. The man who brings the conditions of acceptance, honesty of heart, and uprightness in dealings, will receive grace for grace. Cook.

"He shall receive his righteousness," saith the prophet; and "the gift of righteousness," saith the apostle. It is then another, to be *given us* and to be *received* by us, which we must seek for. And whither shall we go for it? Job alone dispatcheth this point (15: 15; 4: 18; 25: 5). Not to the heavens or stars, they are *unclean in his sight*. Not to the saints, for in them *he found folly*. Not to the angels, for neither in them found he *steadfastness*. Now, if none of these will serve, we see a necessary reason why Jehovah must be a part of this name, "the Lord our righteousness." *Lancelot Andrewes*.—They do not ascend the hill of the Lord as givers but as receivers, and they do not wear their own merits, but a righteousness which they have received. Holy living ensures a blessing as its reward from the thrice Holy God, but it is itself a blessing of the New Covenant and a delightful fruit of the Spirit. S.

6. "This is the generation seeking Thee, those seeking Thy face (O Jehovah), (the true) Israel." The sudden apostrophe to God Himself makes the sentence more impressive without making it obscure. The distinction here made between the nominal and real Israel was peculiarly necessary on occasions which were suited to flatter the national pride of the chosen people, such as that of Jehovah's solemn entrance into Zion, as the peculiar God of Israel. A.—This is the generation of those who seek Thy face—the real Jacob—in the same sense in which the Scriptures speak of the true Israel: "They are not all Israel who are of Israel," but only they who are "Israelites indeed in whom is no guile." (See Rom. 9: 6 and John 1: 47.) On an occasion like this it was specially pertinent to impress the sentiment that none could hope for the favor of the Great and Holy God save such as came before Him pure in heart and hand; humbly seeking His face in the spirit of His true and sincere worshippers. C.

The men who receive righteousness are the men who seek it from God. "This is the generation of them that seek Him, that seek Thy face," and, as the last words ought to be rendered, "This is Jacob, the true Israel." To desire is to have; to seek is to possess; to wish is to be enriched with all this purity. A. M.—This is the generation of *seekers*. Heaven is a generation of finders, of possessors, of enjoyers of God. But here we are a generation of seekers. It is a state of seeking here because it is a state of want; we want something alway. *Sibbes*. 7-10. The entry of Jehovah as King of glory into His sanctuary. The festal procession has now reached the gates of the city of Zion. "The singers go before; the minstrels follow after;" and in the midst of these is the ark, "whose name is called by the name of the Lord of Hosts, that dwelleth between the cherubim" (2 Sam. 6: 2); so that the entry of the ark is the entry of Jehovah Himself into Zion (Num. 10: 35). P.—The procession is now supposed to have arrived at the entrance of the citadel or walled town of Zion, the acropolis of Jerusalem. The gates of this acropolis are those personified in this fine apostrophe. They are called *perpetual* or *everlasting* on account of their antiquity, and not in mere anticipation of their subsequent duration. They are called upon to raise their heads, that He who is about to enter may not debase Himself by stooping to pass through them. A.

To the gates of the citadel of Zion the cry is addressed, to expand themselves conformably with the dignity of the Lord who is entering in and for whom they are too mean and diminutive. Rejoicing in the great honor of which they are deemed worthy, the ancient doors are to open themselves high and wide. Then from the gates of Zion, which are wont to allow only great lords to enter, there echoes back to the festal procession the question, "Who, then, is this glorious king?" and they describe Him more particularly: it is the heroic God, by means of whom Israel has wrested this Zion from the Jebusites with the sword, and by means of whom it has hitherto always proved victorious. D.

8. The answer is prompt and clear. The Lord, the Creator, the performer of all His promises; strong to overcome all resistance, mighty to maintain the cause of the oppressed. *The Lord mighty in war*. The repetition is emphatic. War implies the encounter of good and evil. The Lord defends the right and defeats the wrong. M.

10. The gates of Zion again put their ques-

tion ; no longer, however, hesitatingly, but in order once more to hear the praise of the great King. The gates are silent and open, and Jehovah, enthroned above the cherubim of the sacred ark, enters Zion. D.

There is a more material variation in the answer, where instead of the two phrases, *Jehovah strong and mighty, Jehovah mighty in battle*, the Psalmist substitutes the single but still more expressive title, *Jehovah Zebaoth* or *of Hosts*. This description of Jehovah as the God of heaven no less than of earth, while it sensibly strengthens the expressions of v. 8, at the same time brings us back in the conclusion to the sublime assertion of v. 1, the universal sovereignty of God. The whole Psalm is then brought to a solemn and sonorous close by making the answer echo the terms of the interrogation, *He is the King of glory!* These points of difference between vs. 8 and 10 impart a beautiful variety to the repeated sentence, without impairing in the least the rhetorical or musical effect of the repetition itself, which is followed only by the customary indication of a pause, both in the sense and the performance. A.

The closing note is inexpressibly grand. Jehovah of hosts, Lord of men and angels, Lord of the universe, Lord of the worlds, is the King of glory. All true glory is concentrated upon the true God, for all other glory is but a passing pageant, the painted pomp of an hour. The ascended Saviour is here declared to be the Head and Crown of the universe, the King of glory. Our Immanuel is hymned in sublimest strains. Jesus of Nazareth is Jehovah Sabaoth. S.

Look at the application of these words to the Christ who will dwell in your hearts. The very central idea of the Gospel is this, that if you will open the gates of your hearts, He will come in, in all the plenitude of His victorious power, and dwell in your hearts, their Conqueror and their King. A. M.

The Saviour permitted His exaltation to be revealed through the ascension, in that He thereby made known His boundless dominion over heaven and earth, and made His Godhead manifest. Before the foundation of the world had the Lord possessed this boundless dominion, and His Godhead was evident and known in heaven ; but through His ascension He entered again into His former glory, which He had resigned at His incarnation. But what a difference ! The Man-Jesus receives a share in the

omniscience and omnipresence of the Son of God. The Son of God and the Man-Jesus are one person ; and this one Divine and human person has the Divine dominion which the Son of God had from all eternity. *Caspars.*

Human nature is, at this moment, the most glorious of created natures, taken, in its assumption by the Son, into a nearness of union with the Godhead which none other enjoys ; and where our Head is, there all His true members shall in due time be. As the man Christ Jesus passed through all suffering into glory, even so His people, exposed to dangers which others never knew, and made triumphant through His Spirit dwelling in them, rise to honors with which others can never be crowned ; and, living monuments of all those Divine perfections which were displayed in their redemption, living records of the glory of God, they will awaken among the hosts of heaven a song which throughout eternity will be ever new. *Dods.*

For God to adorn His Son with all this glory in His ascension, thus to make Him ride conqueror up into the clouds, thus to go up with sound of trumpet, with shout of angels and with songs of praises, and, let me add, to be accompanied also with those that rose from the dead after His resurrection, who were the very price of His blood—this does greatly demonstrate that Jesus Christ by what He has done has paid a full price to God for the souls of sinners, and obtained eternal redemption for them ; He had not else rode thus in triumph to heaven. Consider those glorious circumstances that accompany His approach to the gates of the everlasting habitation. The everlasting gates are set, yea, bid stand open : “ Be ye open, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in.” The King of glory is Jesus Christ, and the words are a prophecy of His glorious ascending into the heavens, when He went up as the High Priest of the Church, to carry the price of His blood into the holiest of all. *Bunyan.*
 —Yes, but not He alone. When the triumphs of the chariots of God swept behind Him in their unseen procession, the everlasting portals closed not after them. They are open still, open to us and to our race, and through them pass and shall pass till the end of time the thronging souls of the redeemed. He went to prepare a place for those He loved. He went as the great forerunner of His people, and we must follow in His course. Where the Head is there should the members be ; and our treasure, our life, our affection are meant to be with Him at the right hand of God *Farrar.*

Christ is gone to heaven as a victor, leading sin, Satan, death, hell, and all His enemies in triumph at His chariot wheels. He has not only overcome His enemies for Himself, but for all His people, whom He will make conquerors, yea, "more than conquerors." As He has overcome, so shall they also overcome; and as He is gone to heaven a victor, they shall follow in triumph. He is in heaven as a Saviour. When He came from heaven it was in the character of

a Saviour; when on earth He obtained eternal salvation; in heaven He lives as a Saviour; when He comes again from heaven He will come as a Saviour; and when He will return, He will return as a Saviour. He is also gone to heaven as the rightful heir. He is not gone to heaven as a sojourner, but as "the heir of all things." He is the heir of heavenly glory and happiness, and believers are "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." *Pendlebury.*

PSALM XXV.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

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| <p>1 UNTO thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.
 2 O my God, in thee have I trusted,
 Let me not be ashamed;
 Let not mine enemies triumph over me.
 3 Yea, none that wait on thee shall be ashamed:
 They shall be ashamed that deal treacherously without cause.
 4 Shew me thy ways, O LORD;
 Teach me thy paths.
 5 Guide me in thy truth, and teach me;
 For thou art the God of my salvation;
 On thee do I wait all the day.
 6 Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses:
 For they have been ever of old.
 7 Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions:
 According to thy lovingkindness remember thou me,
 For thy goodness' sake, O LORD.
 8 Good and upright is the LORD:
 Therefore will he instruct sinners in the way.
 9 The meek will he guide in judgment:
 And the meek will he teach his way.
 10 All the paths of the LORD are lovingkindness and truth
 Unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.</p> | <p>11 For thy name's sake, O LORD,
 Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.
 12 What man is he that feareth the Lord?
 Him shall he instruct in the way that he shall choose.
 13 His soul shall dwell at ease;
 And his seed shall inherit the land.
 14 The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him;
 And he will shew them his covenant.
 15 Mine eyes are ever toward the LORD;
 For he shall pluck my feet out of the net.
 16 Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me;
 For I am desolate and afflicted.
 17 The troubles of my heart are enlarged:
 O bring thou me out of my distresses.
 18 Consider mine affliction and my travail;
 And forgive all my sins.
 19 Consider mine enemies, for they are many;
 And they hate me with cruel hatred.
 20 O keep my soul, and deliver me:
 Let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in thee.
 21 Let integrity and uprightness preserve me,
 For I wait on thee.
 22 Redeem Israel, O God,
 Out of all his troubles.</p> |
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THIS is an acrostic or alphabetical Psalm, the first verse beginning with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and the other letters following in order at the beginning of each successive verse. The order is not perfectly observed. Other Psalms which are constructed on a similar principle are the thirty-seventh, the one hundred and cleventh, one hundred and twelfth,

one hundred and nineteenth, and one hundred and forty-fifth. The general character of all these Psalms is didactic; and it is probable that this artificial arrangement was intended to be an assistance to the memory. P.

It is a calmly confident prayer for help against enemies, and for the instructing, pardoning, and guiding grace of God, without any distinct

historical background indicative of its date, and without any clearly marked traits of individuality. It contains nothing which is not in harmony with the believing consciousness of the Church of all ages—nothing specifically distinctive of the Old Testament or of Israel. D.

1. The text illustrates the voluntary contact of a human soul with the Divine. “Unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.” Communion with God is sought. In a sense He is ever with us. But in a higher sense He is with us when we let the soul go out toward Him in loving trust and affection, receiving in return incomes of wisdom, power, courage, faith—in short, everything included in that significant word, grace *S. E. Herrick*.—Taking this verse as the key-note of the Psalm, and therefore expressing comprehensively its main ideas, we shall see that it covers essentially the whole field of prayer and communion with God—the soul lifted up to Him in prayerful trust for protection against enemies, in supplication for Divine guidance into all truth and duty, giving moreover a large place to prayer for the pardon of sin and for constant preservation from its approaches and temptations. No language could more perfectly express the constant experience of the Christian heart. O my God, I lift up my soul continually, imploringly, trustfully, unto Thee. In sorrow or in joy; in straitened or in large places; in sickness or in health; what time “all these things are against me,” or what time all goes well—alike always and everywhere, Thou art my friend, my hope, my joy; therefore my heart looks evermore unto Thee. C.—*Unto Thee* in the fulness of Thy merits, *unto Thee* in the riches of Thy grace: *unto Thee* in the comforts of Thy Spirit; *unto Thee* that Thy thorns may be my crown, Thy blood my balsam, Thy curse my blessing, Thy death my life, Thy cross my triumph. Thus is my “life hid with Christ in God;” and if so, then where should be my soul but where is my life? And therefore “*unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.*” *R. Mossom*.

2. Trusted. Faith is not, as appears to be very often understood, any belief in something about God which is not God; no belief in a proposition, or truth, or doctrine, or fact, even though it be an atonement made, or legal justification provided—these things have a certain relationship and preparative concern, but the faith is a wholly transactional matter toward God Himself. It is the man’s new, self-committing, trusting act, by which he puts himself out on trust, and begins to live suspensively on God, as every created spirit, whether under sin

or clear of it, is made to live. It is a trusting of person to person, substantive being to substantive being, sinner to Saviour. *Bushnell*.

4. *Thy ways, Jehovah, make me know; Thy paths teach me.* As the ways of God throughout this Psalm are the same as in Deut. 32:4, namely, His dispensations toward His people, the way in which He orders their condition and disposes of their lot, the teaching prayed for must be that of experience. “Let me know in my own case what it is to be guided and protected and provided for by God Himself.” A.—He pleads for instruction as to the way in which, according to God’s direction, he is to go. God’s will, no doubt, lies before us in His written Word, but for the right understanding of it God is Himself the needful interpreter. He asks for full knowledge; but that he may translate it into a full living actuality, he needs God again; he needs, in other words, both His enlightening and also His guiding grace. D.

5. Teach me. There is a Divine *teaching*. When we have read and heard, spoken and written the soundest truth and strongest arguments, we still know as if we knew not, and believe as if we believed not, unless God powerfully impresses the same things on our minds, and awakens our souls to feel what we know. All men may easily know that there is an almighty, omniscient, omnipresent, eternal, and perfectly holy and good God, the maker, preserver, and governor of all, who deserves our whole trust, love, and obedience; but how little of this knowledge is to be perceived in men’s hearts or lives? All men know that the world is vanity, that man must die, that riches then cannot profit, that time is precious, and that we have but little time to prepare for eternity; but how little do men seem to have of the real knowledge of these plain truths? Only when God comes in with His powerful awakening light and love, then those things appear as different as if we were beginning to know them. *Barter*.

The longer one lives, provided his mental and moral habits are in any measure correct, the more will he feel the depth of his ignorance, the more will he see that he has as yet caught only a glimpse of the fragments of truth, the less confidently will he speak of the certainty of his knowledge, the profounder will be his consciousness that immeasurable tracts lie beyond his feeble ken, and the more earnestly will he ask for that illuminating spirit that searcheth the dark things of God, the more grateful will he be that there is an open door to One in whom dwelleth all the fulness of wisdom. B. B. E.

Experimental teaching is the burden of this prayer. Lead me according to Thy truth, and prove Thyself faithful ; lead me into truth that I may know its preciousness, lead me by the way of truth that I may manifest its spirit. David knew much, but he felt his ignorance and desired to be still in the Lord's school. It were well for many professors if, instead of cutting out new paths of thought for themselves, they would inquire for the good old ways of God's own truth, and beseech the Holy Ghost to give them sanctified understandings and teachable spirits. S.

On thee do I wait all the day. The child of God breaks his own self-will, and desires to have no will of his own. God's will is his will ; and he inquires what God's will is before undertaking anything, that he may fulfil it, and after finishing anything, that he may prove himself thereby. *Caspars.*—*To wait on God* is to live a life of desire toward God ; to wait on Him with earnest desire to receive supplies from Him. It is to live a life of delight in God and dependence on God, as the child waits on his father, whom he has confidence in, and on whom he casts all his care. To wait on God is to expect all good to come to us from Him, as the worker of all good for us and in us, the giver of all good to us, and the protector of us from all evil. It is to live a life of devotedness to God, as the servant waits on his master, ready to observe his will and to do his work, and in everything to consult his honor and interest. To wait on God is entirely and unreservedly to refer ourselves to His wise and holy directions and disposals, cheerfully to acquiesce in them and comply with them. The servant that waits on his master chooseth not his own way, but follows his master step by step. Thus must we wait on God, as those that have no will of our own but what is wholly resolved into His, and must therefore study to accommodate ourselves to His. H.

Out of holy waiting upon God comes the resolute action for men ; out of childlike looking upward into the spiritual world, the manliest pressing forward into enterprises for the world around you ; out of the believing prayer, each duty of the day. Faith hallows the evening and the morning, and makes them a day of the Lord. The consecrated disciple rises to each new encounter with his lot in a reverent vigilance for every beckoning of God's hand. He falls asleep each night with a sacred curiosity to hear that further revelation of the great secret and mystery of being which the daybreak is sure to tell from the Spirit. He finds a path through the intricacies of earthly duty by a sim-

ple reference to the benignity of the Lord, like the Psalmist, who fled from the onset of his enemies, and the strife of tongues, to the "pavilion of the Most High." F. D. H.

6, 7. When we consider how utterly impossible it is that the infinite mind of God should ever forget, or ever recall to mind things for a time out of his thought, we may get some sense of that condescending accommodation to our limited capacities under which God allows us to speak to Him according to our human ideas, or after the manner of men with men. In these verses the Psalmist prays God to remember one class of things, and *not* to remember certain other things. Very appropriately, too, for it is simply calling the Divine attention to these points and beseeching Him to think of His tender mercies which He has constantly manifested through all the ages past ; and next that He would *not remember* against him the sins of his youth, but blot them from His book of remembrance and fully forgive. What is prayer in any possible case but calling the attention of our Great Father to our wants, reminding Him as the case may be of His promises, and resting our plea on His revealed mercy and goodness—"For Thy goodness' sake, O Lord !" C.

6. "Faith," saith Dickson, "must make use of experiences and read them over unto God out of the register of a sanctified memory, as a recorder to Him who cannot forget." With an unchangeable God it is a most effectual argument to remind Him of His ancient mercies and His eternal love. By tracing all that we enjoy to the fountain-head of everlasting love we shall greatly cheer our hearts. S.

7. Remember not the sins of my youth. The true significance of the present is not revealed in the present. Only the lapse of years makes us dispassionate judges of our earlier selves. The text is the utterance of a man who is letting a sorrowful and faultful past come home to his matured judgment to be tried by its higher standards and its clearer discrimination. "Remember not the sins of my youth." The truth assumed in these words is one which concerns the character of God—the truth, namely, that God cannot be passive in any moral relation. For God to remember sin is to assume an active and hostile relation to sin. In answer to such an appeal as this, we are not to expect either that God will shut sin out of His remembrance, or change His attitude toward sin. But His remembrance of the sinner involves all the infinite activity of His love toward the sinner. It is on this relation of God to the sinner that David throws himself. V

The prayer, "Remember not against me the sins of my youth," holds out hope to such as have let slip this precious time. Thank God, they are not to despair. Still, though almighty grace may work a saving change at a later and even in the latest period of life, not only does the probability of that grow less with every year's practice of sin, persevered in and prolonged over a period of guilty years, so blunts the conscience that it never recovers the fineness of its edge; nor is the heart capable of receiving the most delicate and beautiful impressions of Christ's image unless they are stamped on it while, like metals or melted wax, it is soft and tender, ere it has grown hard and cold. It is well to give Jesus even blighted affections and a broken heart; it is well when the world cannot fill our hearts to turn our trembling steps from its broken cisterns to the fountain of living water; it is well when men turn from shattered fortunes and mothers from their sweet, lifeless confined idols, to throw themselves at the feet or into the arms of Jesus. But it is better still, seeking Him early, to give our youth to Christ; with its glistening dew to bathe the Rose of Sharon; to honor God with our first-fruits. *Guthrie.*

7. *According to Thy mercy, not mine; for Thy goodness' sake, not mine, for in me dwelleth no manner of thing that is good. Let Thy goodness, then, be the motive, Thy mercy the rule of all that grace and of all those blessings Thou vouchsafest unto my soul. Mossom.*

8. Here are two most opposite characters: a good and upright Lord, and perverse sinners. Good and upright as the Lord is, He might justly give sinners up to perdition; but no, He will not leave them to perish in their ignorance and obstinacy; He will teach them. This implies that sinners are so ignorant of Divine truth that no teaching besides that of the Lord the Spirit can instruct and make them wise unto salvation. By repentance unto life in His way of peace, in the walk of faith, in the path of love, truth and holiness, the Spirit will teach redeemed sinners on earth till He brings them to glory; His teaching shall be as effectual to their glorification as the death of Christ for their salvation. *W. Mason.*

9. *He will guide the humble in justice, and teach the humble His way.* The common version of *meek* is too restricted and descriptive of mere temper. The Hebrew word is the nearest equivalent to *humble* in its strong religious sense. The omission of the article may be explained as a poetic license, and the word translated *the humble*, so as to include the whole class. *A.*

The meek will He guide, the meek will He teach, those that are humble and low in their own eyes, that are distrustful of themselves, desirous to be taught, and honestly resolved to follow the Divine guidance. These He will guide in judgment—that is, by the rule of the written Word; He will guide them in that which is practical, which relates to sin and duty, so that they may keep conscience void of offence; and He will do it judiciously—that is, He will suit His conduct to their case; He will teach sinners with wisdom, tenderness, and compassion, and as they are able to bear. He will teach them His way. All good people make God's way their way, and desire to be taught that; and those who do so shall be taught and led in that way. *H.*—These words bind earth to heaven. There is here below therefore a way which leads to God, a way where we can walk with God; in the midst of all these roads which cross each other, and which nearly all lead to vanity, there is a way which ends in no abyss, and which crosses victoriously the valley of the shadow of death. Would you know the way that leads to God? Be humble. Pride wants to see God face to face, and His splendor blinds it. Humility bends itself before Him, and sees its path all flooded by His light. The Lord teaches His way to the humble. *E. Bersier.*

In some trying condition, where the Christian has not been able by the understanding to settle any wise course of proceeding, how very clear has everything been made to him, step by step, by the simple and consciously single-eyed impulse of love to his Master! And when all is over, and his crisis is past, how plain is it to him that he has been guided by a wisdom in his loving affinities which he had not in the reasons of his understanding! *Bushnell.*—The Lord presents Himself to us when treading faith's dark path, and greets us now with kindly word, now with some great, astounding deed. Bonds that must needs be broken through, He will Himself both quietly and easily unloose. Mist that might rise before us He dispels, ere they can hide the sun from us. There falls not to the ground a single word of all the good which He has promised to bestow on us when entering upon the narrow path; and actual experience soon shows that we are strengthened for accomplishing all that He promises we shall be able to effect, using our staff of faith. *Van O.*

Our difficulty in ascertaining His will is not at all where God works independently of us; it is where He works with us and we with Him: where events are apparently as much our own

bringing about as His, and where in the use of means, at the best imperfect and unreliable, we seem to take all pains sometimes only to go wrong. What rules are there, in such a case, beyond diligence, and patience, and obedience, and prayer? Surely none. Diligence in consulting friends and in procuring information, and in weighing our case on all sides. Patience, for half our mistakes in life come from being in a hurry, and we are just as likely to go wrong if we rush on in advance of God's providence as if we lag idly behind it. Obedience, for to be willing to do God's will is the real crux of the matter. Then prayer, honest, humble, simple, persevering prayer; and we can do no more. Anything is more possible than that God should not guide the meek in judgment. *Bishop Thorold.*

10. We may be very sure that God will teach His erring but penitent people all the ways of life that please Him, for His own ways of dealing with them are wholly merciful and truthful, *i.e.*, are infinitely kind and faithful to His covenant. The "paths of the Lord" are here His own ways of dealing with His covenant people. C.—The paths are those in which, in conformity with His revelation, will and purpose, He walks with men. These paths are "grace," for the salvation of men is their goal, and "truth," for at every step they confirm the trustworthiness of His promises. Grace is their Alpha and truth is their Omega. But only those who faithfully and obediently keep His covenant and His testimonies are made partakers in His grace. To the Psalmist the name of Jehovah, which unfolds itself in grace and truth, is dear. On it he bases the prayer which follows. D.

Mercy and truth are the paths in which God constantly walks in reference to the children of men; and so frequently does He show them mercy, and so frequently does He fulfil His truth, that His paths are easily discerned. How frequent, how deeply indented, and how multiplied are those tracks to every family and individual! But He is more abundantly merciful to those who keep His covenant and His testimonies; *i.e.*, those who are conformed not only to the letter, but to the spirit of His pure religion. *A. Clarke.*—As His *nature* is *love and truth*, so all His *ways* are *mercy and truth*. They are "*mercy*" in respect of aiming at our good, and "*truth*" in respect of fulfilling His promises and faithful carriage to us; therefore, whatsoever befalls thee, though it be clean contrary to thy expectation, interpret it in love. *T. Goodwin.*

11. For Thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great. The Psalmist useth two arguments, God's name and the greatness of his sin. And both are as good arguments as they were then. *Charnock.*—In the phrase, "For Thy name's sake," the *nature* of God, His attributes of character, are really expressed under the word "name." The force of the plea therefore as used in prayer is that on the ground of His infinite love, pity, compassion, He would show mercy in this particular case. C.—The greater the weight of misery under which you lie, the more need you have of mercy, and the more will be the glory of it in you. It is strange kind of argument used by the Psalmist, and yet a sure one; it concludes well and strongly. *Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great.* The soul pressed with the greatness of its sin lying heavy upon it may make that very pressure an argument to press the forgiveness of it at the hands of free mercy; it is *for Thy name's sake*, that makes it strong. *Leighton.*

Mercy with relation to an offender is a disposition to forgive. Mercy in reference to a sufferer is a disposition to relieve. In the case of man and the Divine conduct toward him these two are inseparably united. Under the government of a holy and benevolent Deity misery uniformly presupposes guilt, and guilt as necessarily infers misery as an inevitable sequence. When the guilty are pardoned, the miserable are made happy. And when the miserable are made happy, it is by the taking away of the sin from which their misery originated. *R. Wardlaw.*

In order to obtain remission of his sins, the sinner alleges to God that they are many and great. Verily so; and that not for love of the sinner nor for the love of sin, but for the love of the honor and glory of God; which glory, by how much the sins He forgives are greater and more numerous, by so much the more ennobles and exalts itself. And as the greatness of the Divine mercy is immense, and the multitude of His lovingkindnesses infinite, in order that the one and the other may in a certain manner have a proportionate material of glory, it is necessary to the very greatness of mercy that the sins to be pardoned should be great, and necessary to the very multitude of lovingkindnesses that they should be many. *Vieyra.*

The more miserable men are in their own sense, the fitter objects they are for God to show mercy unto. Thus it was with the publican, and so with the prodigal; therefore never doubt, though thy iniquities be never so great, there is a sea of mercy in God. Bernard well observes

the difference between justice and mercy : justice requires that there should be desert, but mercy looks upon them that are miserable ; and, saith the father, true mercy doth affect misery ; mercy doth not stand upon inquisition, but it is glad to find occasion of exercising itself. *Stock.*

He confesses his great iniquity ; he pleads pardon for it. On what does he found his plea ? *For Thy name's sake, O Lord ;* Thou hast taken upon Thee that precious name, Jesus ; Thou wilt be *salvation* to the ends of the earth. Thy blood cleanseth from all sin ; wash me in it and I shall be whiter than snow ; all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. While these glorious truths stand upon record, I cannot doubt, I dare not despair ; the belief of them causes me to pray, and plead, and hope ; *great* as mine iniquity is, *great* as my distress is, yet Thou art *a great God and Saviour*, to pardon my sin and give peace to my soul. "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Therefore heaven rings with acclamations of joy from such pardoned, glorified sinners, giving glory "unto Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood." *W. Mason.*

Good people sometimes wonder, and sometimes are made doubtful and sad about themselves by this abiding and even increased consciousness of sin. There is no need to be so. The more our lives are brought into fellowship with the perfect life, the more shall we feel our own shortcomings. Let us be thankful if our consciences speak to us more loudly than they used to do. It is a sign of growing holiness, as the tingling in a frost-bitten limb is of returning life. Let us seek to cultivate and increase the sense of our own imperfection, and be sure that the diminution of a consciousness of sin means not diminished power of sin, but lessened horror of it, lessened perception of right, lessened love of goodness, and is an omen of death, not a symptom of life. *A. M.*

12. *He guides him* and will guide him. There is not only an affirmation, but a promise. The *way*, as in the foregoing context, is the providential way in which God directs the course of a man's life. His *choosing* it implies not only sovereign authority, but a gracious regard to the interests of His servant.

13. *The land.* The land of Canaan ; and as this was the standing promise of the law, uttered even in the decalogue (Ex. 20 : 12), it became a formula for all the blessings implicitly embraced in the promise of Canaan to the ancient Israel, and is so used even by our Lord Himself (Matt. 5 : 5).

14. *The friendship of Jehovah is to (those) fearing Him, and His covenant to make them know.* The word translated *friendship* means originally a company of persons sitting together (Psalm 111 : 1) ; then familiar conversation (Psalm 55 : 14) ; then confidential intercourse, intimacy, friendship (Prov. 3 : 32) ; then a confidence or secret (Prov. 11 : 13). The meaning of the whole verse seems to be that Jehovah condescends to hold familiar intercourse with those who fear Him, and enters into covenant relation with them for the purpose of making them know all that they need know for His service or their own advantage. *A.*

The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. There is a vital sense in which "the natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God," and in which all the realities of Christian experience are utterly hid from his perceptions. To speak to him of communion with God, of the sense of pardon, of the lively expectation of heaven, of the witness of the Holy Ghost, of the struggles of the spiritual life, would be like reasoning with a blind man about colors, or with one deaf about musical harmony. *J. Morison.*—There are conditions by compliance with which God's Spirit comes into the soul with all its revelations—such conditions as these : "The secret of the Lord is with them that *fear* Him." "With this man will I dwell, even with him that is of a *meek* and *contrite* spirit." "If any man will *do* His will, he shall know of the doctrine"—reverence, love, meekness, contrition, obedience ; these conditions having taken place, God enters into the soul, whispers His secret, becomes visible, imparts knowledge and conviction. *F. W. R.*—Seek earnestly the faith of full assurance ; and as a means to it, practise daily the faith of steady adherence. Love and obey God as faithfully as if you were absolutely certain of acceptance at last, and you will soon be certain of it here. "If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine ;" and "Whosoever shall do the will of God," says our Saviour, "the same is My brother and sister and mother." *F. D. H.*

If we are humble in our ignorance and confiding in our devotion ; if we submit ourselves to His discipline as not knowing what is best, and as not wishing to choose for ourselves ; as satisfied that He who has all power and knows all things will order all wisely, He will give us proofs of the wisdom of our trust ; *the secret of the Lord* will become ours ; we shall feel He "sees all as if that all were one ; loves one as if that one were all." *H. Hooker.*—Albeit

the Lord's covenant with the visible Church be open, and plain in itself to all men in all the articles thereof, yet it is a mystery to know the inward sweet fellowship which a soul may have with God by virtue of this covenant; and a man fearing God shall know this mystery, when such as are covenanters only in the letter do remain ignorant thereof: for to *the fearers of God* only is this promise made—that to *them* the Lord *will show His covenant*. *Dickson*.

It is neither learning nor labor that can give insight into God's secrets, those "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." These things come by revelation, and must therefore be obtained by prayer. Those that diligently seek Him shall be of His *Cabinet Council*, shall know His soul secrets, and be admitted into a gracious familiarity and friendship. "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." *Trapp*. — Walking with God is the best way to know the mind of God; friends who walk together impart their secrets one to another: "*The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him*." Noah walked with God, and the Lord revealed a great *secret* to him, of destroying the old world, and having him in the ark. Abraham walked with God, and God made him one of His privy council: "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" *T. Watson*.

Fellowship with God! the real communion of our minds with His!—what tongue can express it? what heart adequately conceive it? And yet this honor have all the saints. It is not a figure, not a flourish of rhetoric, no dream of the mystic. It is a great fact; and in reflecting upon it I have often been impressed with the words of a dying saint: "Preach it at my funeral, publish it at my burial, that the Lord converses familiarly with man." His secret is indeed with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant. How coarse and degrading by the side of this doctrine do those views of happiness appear which make it consist in pleasure; which, instead of setting man upon the improvement of himself, the perfection of his nature and the expansion of his energies in communion with God, send him in quest of the beggarly elements of earth, which all are to perish in the using! *Thornhill*.

15. He who has his eyes directed steadily toward God is ever in the praying mood, which cannot remain unanswered. This constant looking at God aims here at deliverance from hostile nets. It is He alone who can pull him out of

the net of entangled circumstances of life into which he has come to be ensnared, not without guilt on his own part. D.—The writer claims to be fixed in his trust and constant in his expectation; he looks in confidence, and waits in hope. We may add to this look of faith and hope the obedient look of service, the humble look of reverence, the admiring look of wonder, the studious look of meditation, and the tender look of affection. Happy are those whose eyes are never removed from their God. S.

18. It is doubly painful that a sense of sin toward God should blend itself with countless other sorrows and trials, so that with every prayer for help must be mingled a cry for pardon of sin. But such is Christian experience, the purest joy of which is evermore that our Father above is plenteous in mercy and loves to blot out the sins of His penitent, believing people. C.

20. "*O keep my soul*" out of evil, "*and deliver me*" when I fall into it. This is another version of the prayer, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." S.

22. *Redeem, O God, Israel out of all his troubles!* As the Psalm was designed, from the first, to be a vehicle of devout feeling and desire for the whole Church, it is here wound up with a petition showing this extent of purpose. The Psalmist prays no longer for himself, but for all Israel. A.

The tendency of Christian mystics to divert the attention from Christ to the soul in which God and Christ dwell, so that self becomes the object of contemplation, is subtle, attractive, and dangerous. To contemplate what Christ effects in us, instead of what Christ *is*—to dwell on what He has given us, instead of the unsearchable riches and fulness of the Lord—will produce *self-deception* instead of *self-judgment*, and can only *lower* the standard of perfectness, which is none other but Christ Himself. Our great and constant desire ought to be to know Christ, and, having no confidence in the flesh, to rejoice in Him, waiting for His coming, when, delivered from the body of sin, we shall be like Him. The constant watching of the growth of the inner man leads us also "to mistake passing emotions for real and abiding love of good," and to exalt any peculiar intuition into a source of self-glorification. The minds that feel most attracted by the mystic writers need most to be on their guard in reading them. Let everything lead us to the spiritual and diligent study of the perfect, healthful, and precious *Word of God*. A. *Saphir*.

PSALM XXVI.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1 JUDGE me, O LORD, for I have walked in mine integrity :
 I have trusted also in the LORD without wavering.
 2 Examine me, O LORD, and prove me ;
 Try my reins and my heart.
 3 For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes ;
 And I have walked in thy truth.
 4 I have not sat with vain persons ;
 Neither will I go in with dissemblers.
 5 I hate the congregation of evil-doers,
 And will not sit with the wicked.
 6 I will wash mine hands in innocency ;
 So will I compass thine altar, O LORD :

7 That I may make the voice of thanksgiving to be heard,
 And tell of all thy wondrous works.
 8 LORD, I love the habitation of thy house,
 And the place where thy glory dwelleth.
 9 Gather not my soul with sinners,
 Nor my life with men of blood :
 10 In whose hands is mischief [*or, crime*],
 And their right hand is full of bribes.
 11 But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity :
 Redeem me, and be merciful unto me.
 12 My foot standeth in an even place :
 In the congregations will I bless the LORD.

THERE are wanting in this Psalm those touching confessions of sinfulness and pleadings for forgiveness which in the twenty-fifth Psalm are thrice repeated. Here is only the avowal of conscious uprightness—an avowal solemnly made as in the sight of the Searcher of hearts, and deriving, no doubt, much of its intensity and almost impassioned force from the desire, on the part of the singer, to declare his entire separation from and aversion to the vain and evil men by whom he is surrounded.

I. Judge me ; *i.e.*, vindicate my cause, so that my innocency may be made manifest ; do me justice. **Integrity ;** not moral perfection, but uprightness of heart, conscious sincerity of intention is meant, and this as resting on that unwavering trust in God which follows. P.—He cannot justify himself against the charge of sin ; he owns his iniquity is great, and he is undone if God in His infinite mercy do not forgive him ; but he can justify himself against the charge of hypocrisy, and has reason to hope that, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, he is one of those that may expect to find favor with God. It is a comfort to those who are falsely accused that there is a righteous God, who sooner or later will clear up their innocence, and a comfort to all who are sincere in religion, that God Himself is a witness to their sincerity. H.—A good cause, a good conscience, and a good deportment, are good grounds of appeal to God. *Ingram Cobbin.*

The Scriptures speak of integrity ; in manifold and bold forms they commend it, and the

good men of the Scripture times testify their consciousness of it in their appeals to God. David says repeatedly, “I have walked in mine integrity.” The Proverbs testify in language still more unqualified, “That the integrity of the upright shall preserve them ;” “The just man walketh in his integrity.” In the same view it is that good men are so often called “the upright” and “the just”—“Mark the perfect man and behold the upright ;” “The way of the just is uprightness, Thou most upright dost weigh the path of the just.” They are called “righteous” too and “right” in the same manner, and it is even declared that they “shall deliver their own souls by their righteousness.” And lest we should imagine that the integrity honored by so many commendations and examples is only a crude and partial conception, belonging to the piety of the Old Testament, the Christian disciples of the New are testifying also in a hundred ways to the integrity, before God and man, in which they consciously live. They dare to say that they have a conscience void of offence, that they serve God with a pure conscience, that they count it nothing to be judged of man’s judgment, when they know that God approves them. They rejoice in the confidence that they are made manifest unto God, and tenderly hope that they may be made manifest also in the consciences of men. They are so assured in the sense of their own integrity, as followers of Christ, that they even dare to exhort others to walk as they have them for examples. And this holy consciousness of being right with God,

of being wholly offered up to Him, of wanting to know nothing but Christ, of losing all things for His sake, appears and reappears in as many forms as language can possibly take. They spend their life, as it were, in the testimony that they please God. Making the strongest confessions of ill desert, and resting their salvation everywhere on the justifying grace and righteousness of God, they still are able, somehow, to be free in professing their own conscious integrity in their discipleship, and the sense they have of being right and true—whole men, so to speak, in the service of their Master. A man of integrity (in the Psalmist's meaning) is a man whose aim, in the right, is a whole aim, in distinction from one whose aim is divided, partial, or unstable. It is such a state of right intention as allows the man to be consciously right-minded, and to firmly rest in the singleness of his purpose. It does not mean that he has never been a sinner or that he is not now, but simply that whatever may have been his life or the guilt of it, he is now turned as regards the intent of his soul to do and be wholly right; firmly set, of course, to receive all the possible helps in his reach, for maintaining a life wholly right with God and man. *Bushnell.*

2. *Try me, Jehovah, and prove me; assay my reins and my heart.* The first verb is supposed by etymologists to signify originally trial by touch, the second by smell, and the third by fire. In usage, however, the second is constantly applied to moral trial or temptation, while the other two are frequently applied to the testing of metals by the touchstone or the furnace. This is indeed the predominant usage of the third verb, which may therefore be represented by the technical metallurgic term, *assay*. *Reins* and *heart* are joined, as seats of the affections. The prayer of this verse is an appeal to God's omniscience for the Psalmist's integrity of purpose. A.—It is not so much a challenge that God would satisfy Himself of his innocence as rather a prayer to prove the state of his mind; and if it be not as he himself deems, that He would make that clear to him. D.

Prove, purify. Words used of testing metals; the last especially of trying and refining them by means of smelting. The *reins*, as the seat of the lower animal passions; the *heart*, as comprising not only the higher affections, but also the will and the conscience. He thus desires to keep nothing back; he will submit himself to the searching flame of the Great Refiner, that all dross of self-deception may be purged away. P.

As gold by fire is severed and parted from

dross, so singleness of heart and true Christian simplicity is best seen and made most evident in troubles and afflictions. In prosperity every man will seem godly, but afflictions do draw out of the heart whatsoever is there, whether it be good or bad. *Cawdray.*—God knows every man's true character, for He knows the thoughts and intents of the heart, and sees through every disguise. David prays, *Lord, examine me*; which intimates that he was well pleased that God did know him, and truly desirous that He would discover him to Himself, and discover him to all the world. H.—This is a very bold appeal, and made by a man like David, who feared the Lord exceedingly, it manifests a most solemn and complete conviction of innocence. The expressions here used should teach us the thoroughness of the Divine judgment, and the necessity of being in all things profoundly sincere, lest we be found wanting at the last. S.

Here is the true and proper method of self-examination: *it must be accomplished under and through the scrutiny or inspecting power of God; we truly prove ourselves when He proves us, and may rightly approve ourselves only when He approves us.* God is manifested always in the consciousness of them that love Him, and are right toward Him. They need not go into any curious self-examination that will only confuse and obscure the witness. They will know God by an immediate knowledge or revelation. They will have His Spirit witnessing with theirs. They will have the testimony that they please God. In their simple love they will know God's love to them; for he that loveth knoweth God. For a man then to be obliged to examine himself, and study and cipher over himself to find out whether he is a child of God or not, is no good sign; for if he is, he should have a witness more immediate, and should want no such information at all. God knows him perfectly, and if God has revealed Himself in the consciousness, if he has the witness of God and the testimony that he pleases God, what more can he have? and if he has not this at all, what can he have, or what, by self-scrutiny, find to make good the want of it? *Bushnell.*

God's proving does not mean that He stands by watching how His child will behave. He helps us to sustain the trial to which He subjects us. Life is all probation; and because it is so, it is all a field for the Divine aid. The motive of His proving men is that they may be strengthened. He puts us into His gymnasium to improve our physique. If we stand the trial, our faith is increased; if we fall, we learn self-distrust and closer clinging to Him. A. M.

3. He tells us how confidently he sets himself in God's light. God's grace is that on which his eye is fixed, the delight of his eye, and he walks in God's truth. This lovingkindness of God has hitherto been steadily the model of his life, this truth of God the rule and boundary of his walk. D.

To be duly effective, truth must not merely fall from the lip, but breathe forth from the life; it must come, not like incense from the censer that only holds it, but like fragrance from a flower, exhaling from a nature suffused with it throughout. *Caird*.—If we set God's lovingkindness before us as our pattern, to which we endeavor to conform ourselves, if we set it before us as our great engagement and encouragement to duty, and are afraid of doing anything to forfeit God's favor, and in care by all means to keep ourselves in His love; this will not only be a good evidence of our integrity, but will have a great influence upon our perseverance in it. "*I have walked in Thy truth, according to Thy law, for Thy law is truth.*" Those only may expect the benefit of God's lovingkindness that live up to His truths, and His laws that are grounded upon them.

4. This also was an evidence of his faithfulness to his God, that he never associated with those who he had any reason to think were disaffected to religion, or were open enemies or false friends to its interests. Great care to avoid bad company is both a good evidence of our integrity and a good means to preserve us in it. H.

5. Friendship, according to the philosopher, is one soul in two bodies. But how can they ever be of one soul that are as different as air and earth, and as contrary as fire and water? All true love is a motion of the soul toward the enjoyment of God for himself and his neighbors for God's sake; so that he can never truly love man who doth not love his Maker. God is the only foundation upon which we can build friendship; therefore such as live without Him cannot love us in Him. *Swinnoek*.

6. Not content with abstaining from all share in the counsels of the wicked, he is fully resolved to adhere to the service of the Lord. He will cleanse himself from all that would unfit him for that service, and then cleave to the sanctuary where God dwells. The idea expressed is that of close adherence and devoted attachment. A.—The washing of the hands is elsewhere a symbolical act, it is here merely a figurative confession of his consciousness of innocence, and is naturally suggested in this form, from the idea of the priest washing him-

self preparatory to service being associated with the idea of the altar. D.

"*So will I compass Thine altar, O Lord.*" Priests unto God must take great care to be personally cleansed; the brazen laver was as needful as the golden altar; God's worship requires us to be holy in life. We must not bring our thank offerings with hands defiled with guilt. We see from this verse that holy minds delight in the worship of the Lord, and that it is their deepest concern never to enter upon any course of action which would unfit them for communion with God. S.—One morning, as Gott-hold was pouring water into a basin, he recollected the words of Scripture: "*I will wash my hands in innocency.*" Upon this he mused, and said, "Henceforth, my God, when I pour out water to wash with, let me call to mind my duty to cleanse my hands from wicked actions, my mouth from wicked words, and my heart from wicked desires, that so I may be enabled to lift holy hands unto Thee, and with unspotted lips and heart worship Thee." "*Emblems.*"

7. "*And tell of all Thy wondrous works.*" God's people should not be tongue-tied. God's works of love are wondrous if we consider the unworthiness of their objects, the costliness of their method, and the glory of their result. And as men find pleasure in discoursing upon things remarkable and astonishing, so the saints should rejoice to tell of the great things which the Lord hath done for them. S.—In his attendance on God's ordinances he aimed at the glory of God, and was much in the thankful praise and adoration of Him. He had an eye to the place of worship as the place where God's honor dwelt, and therefore made it his business there to honor God and to give Him the glory due to His name; to publish with the voice of thanksgiving all God's wondrous works. God's gracious works, which call for our thanksgiving, are all wondrous works, which call for our admiration. We ought to publish them and tell of them for His glory and the excitement of others to praise Him; and we ought to do it with the voice of thanksgiving, as those that are sensible of our obligations. H.

8. *Jehovah, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place of the dwelling of Thy glory.* This verse shows that his compassing the altar was intended to denote his love for the earthly residence of God, the altar being there put for the whole sanctuary, which is here distinctly mentioned. A.—If there is to be a real, lasting love for our churches in the hearts of Christian men, it must be because we believe them to be centres of Christian life through the grace

of God. No external beauty, no desire to improve the outside of religion, can avail if there be rottenness within. To love the Lord Jesus Christ, to adhere to those plain, simple Gospel doctrines which are set forth in the New Testament—this must be the strength of our reformed Church. To this its ministers and people are pledged by their very declaration that they rest all their hopes on the pure word of God. *A. C. Tait.*

9. The Lord hath a harvest and a gleaning time also, set for cutting down and binding together in the fellowship of judgments God's enemies, who have followed the same course of sinning: for here we are given to understand that God will "*gather their souls,*" and so will let none escape. *Dickson.*

11. Trusting in God, the Psalmist resolves that the plain way of righteousness shall be his choice, and those who will may prefer the tortuous paths of violence and deceit. Yet he is by no means a self-righteous vaunter of his own strength, for he cries for redemption and pleads for mercy. Our integrity is not absolute nor inherent, it is a work of grace in us, and is

marred by human infirmity; we must, therefore, resort to the redeeming blood and to the throne of mercy, confessing that though we are saints among men, we still bow as sinners before God. *S.*

12. The epilogue. The prayer is changed into rejoicing, which is certain of the answer that shall be given. Hitherto shut in, as it were, in deep trackless gorges, he even now feels himself to be standing upon a pleasant plain, commanding a wide range of vision, and now blends his grateful praise of God with the song of the worshipping congregation and its full-voiced choirs. *D.*—The *even place* upon which our foot stands is the sure covenant faithfulness, eternal promise and immutable oath of the Lord of Hosts; there is no fear of falling from this solid basis or of its being removed from under us. Established in Christ Jesus by being vitally united to Him, we have nothing left to occupy our thoughts but the praises of our God. Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, and when assembled, let us not be slow to contribute our portion of thanksgiving. *S.*

PSALM XXVII.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

1 THE LORD is my light and my salvation ;
whom shall I fear ?
The LORD is the strength of my life ; of
whom shall I be afraid ?
2 When evil doers came upon me to eat up
my flesh,
Even mine adversaries and my foes, they
stumbled and fell.
3 Though an host should encamp against me,
My heart shall not fear :
Though war should rise against me,
Even then will I be confident.
4 One thing have I asked of the LORD, that
will I seek after ;
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
To behold the beauty of the LORD, and to
inquire in his temple.
5 For in the day of trouble he shall keep me
secretly in his pavilion :
In the covert of his tabernacle shall he hide
me ;

He shall lift me up upon a rock
6 And now shall mine head be lifted up above
mine enemies round about me ;
And I will offer in his tabernacle sacrifices
of joy ;
I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the
LORD.
7 Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice :
Have mercy also upon me, and answer me.
8 *When thou saidst,* Seek ye my face ; my
heart said unto thee,
Thy face, LORD, will I seek.
9 Hide not thy face from me ;
Put not thy servant away in anger :
Thou hast been my help ;
Cast me not off, neither forsake me, O God
of my salvation.
10 For my father and my mother have forsaken
me,
But the LORD will take me up.
11 Teach me thy way, O LORD ;

And lead me in a plain path,
Because of mine enemies [*them that lie in
wait for me*].

12 Deliver me not over unto the will of mine
adversaries :

For false witnesses are risen up against me,
and such as breathe out cruelty.

13 *I had fainted*, unless I had believed to see
the goodness of the LORD
In the land of the living.

14 Wait on the LORD :

Be strong, and let thine heart take courage ;
Yea, wait thou on the LORD.

THE Psalmist breathes his longing for the Divine fellowship, which shall be at once vision and guidance, and hidden life in distress, and stability, and victory, and shall break into music of perpetual praise. A. M.—To remain all his life near to God's house is here his one prayer, and that, delivered from his enemies, he will there yet present his thank-offering is his confident expectation. D.—The expression of confidence occurs at the beginning and the end, the description of the danger and the prayer for deliverance in the body of the Psalm. If God be for him and admit him to His household, he is satisfied and safe (vs. 1-6). With this persuasion he implores that God will interpose for his deliverance from present danger (vs. 7-12). If he did not believe that God would grant his request he must despair ; but as he does believe it, he encourages himself to wait for it (vs. 13, 14). There is no apparent reference to any particular historical occasion, but an obvious intention to provide a vehicle of pious sentiment for all God's people under the form of trial here described. A.

The Psalm consists of an expression of the most assured confidence in Jehovah, whatever enemies may threaten, and an earnest cry for help and comfort in present need, out of which the soul rises again to hopeful trust in God. P.—He must have little knowledge of the fluctuations of the devout life who is surprised to find so swift a passage from confidence to conscious weakness. While the usual order in the Psalms, as the usual order in good men's experience, is that prayer for deliverance precedes praise and triumph, true communion with God is bound to no mechanical order, and may begin with gazing on God, and realizing the mysteries of beauty in His secret place, ere it drops to earth. It is perhaps a nobler effect of faith to begin with God and hymn the victory as if already won, than to begin with trouble and to call for deliverance. But with whichever we commence, the prayer of earth must include both ; and so long as we are weak, and God our strength, its elements must be "supplication and thanksgiving." The prayer of our Psalm bends round again to its beginning,

and after the plaintive cry for help breaks once more into confidence (vs. 13, 14). A. M.

I. Though darkness break in upon him, the darkness of night, of trouble, of temptation, Jehovah is his light, and if he is in Him, he is in the light, and there shines on him a sun which never sets and suffers no eclipse. That God is light is no metaphor. David calls Him his salvation in view of all that oppresses him, and the stronghold of his life in view of all which endangers him ; in Jehovah he overcomes far and wide, in Him is his life hidden as in a rocky fortress. D.

My light. This is the first, and, in the Old Testament, the only passage in which the term "light" is expressly applied to the Lord ; although expressions full of the same beautiful thought occur in Isa. 60 : 1-20 and Micah 7 : 8. In the New Testament we read "God is light" (1 John 1 : 5) ; Christ "the true light" (John 1 : 7-9) ; and the Lamb the light of the Church (Rev. 21 : 23). Cook.

The combination of the two ideas, "light and salvation," is very suggestive. Light is essential to life, health, and growth. Owing to this healing, life-giving power of natural light, we see how it becomes the salvation of the natural man. He owes to it all the vital force by which he conquers and beats back the foes of nature that seek to destroy his life. And in regard to our souls, the Lord is our salvation because He is our light. What the sunlight is to the plant, God is to the soul. He is the source of our spiritual life. Between Him and the nature which He formed in the image of Himself there is the closest and the most intimate relationship. They are co-natural. Apart from Him the soul can find no substitute for God, none to fill His place, none to induce the sweet contentment and calm repose which it seeks. "Whom have I in the heavens but Thee ; and there is none upon the earth whom I desire besides Thee ;" this is the deepest language of the soul. The good of man is to be found in the deepened sense of God's love, in the clear revelation of His grace and the fuller enjoyment of His peace. If He lifts upon us the light of His countenance, we are saved in the truest and

highest sense. No assertion, then, of our dependence upon God for the creation and maintenance of the life of our souls can be too absolute. We need all of God for our saving health, for the very life of our souls. All His qualities, all His powers, are indispensable for our spiritual existence. In Christ Jesus, God in all His fulness has come very near to us; is our brother-born; lies in our bosoms; dwells in our hearts, and transfigures us into His own likeness, as the sunflower becomes an image of the sun.

And thus having God as his light and his salvation, the Psalmist might well say, "Whom shall I fear?" Having his heart at rest in God, and having his times in God's hands, what cause for fear remained? With peace within and light without, he was raised above all earthly fears. His eyes were opened; and while he was compassed about with foes innumerable and most formidable, he saw himself at the same time surrounded with horses and chariots of fire, and realized that greater was He that was with him than all that could be against him; that the hostile things and persons of life could have no power at all against him, were it not given them for wise and gracious purposes by his heavenly Father. And so, if we fear God, we need know no other fear. He has taken away all that causes us to fear; all that can affright us is in the firm control of a wise and loving almighty hand. All providence becomes to us special providence; all things are eager and tender ministers to us. More important interests are involved in our salvation than in the fate of the whole natural creation; and sooner than a hair of our head shall be injured, God would bury the whole physical world in ruin. God is our refuge and strength: a very present help in trouble; therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed. Perfect trust in God is perfect peace. *H. Macmillan.*

To know that "God is light" is one thing, and to be able to say, "The Lord is *my* light," is quite another thing. The Lord must be the light by which the way of life is made plain to us—the light by which we may see to walk in that way—the light that exposes the darkness of sin—the light by which we can discover the hidden sins of our own hearts. When He is thus *our light*, then He is *our salvation* also. He is pledged to guide us right; not only to show us sin, but to save us from it. Not only to make us see God's hatred of sin, and His curse upon it, but also to draw us unto God's love, and to take away the curse. With the Lord lighting us along the road of salvation, who, or what need we fear? Our life is hid with Christ in

God. We are weak, very weak, but His "strength is made perfect in weakness." With the Lord Himself pledged to be the strength of our life, of whom need we be afraid? *Anon.*

When we can truly say, "Christ is all," then God enables us to add, "And Christ is mine." When we have no righteousness of our own, when we can find nothing within ourselves wherein to trust and rejoice, when we feel our exceeding sinfulness and helplessness—then God comforts us with His abundant mercy. We behold the amazing, infinite, and immutable love of God; we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Jesus Himself is our righteousness, our beauty. We sing the new song. God is our light and our salvation. *Saphir.*

The true test question by which every man is to try his religion is this, Have I found God in it? Has it more than pleased me? has it pierced me, brought me to the light, given me to know God? If it has not done this for you, too little cannot be made of it. And the sooner it is cast behind you, with all its fine sentiments, in a total turning of your heart to God Himself, the better. *The life of God in the soul of man*—that is religious character, and beside that there is none. And that is salvation, without which there is no salvation. For this it is that makes salvation; that the soul, before without God, alienated from the life of God, is won back to a real God-welcome, and has Him revealed inwardly in holy Fatherhood, as the life of its life. Hungry as the prodigal, it has come back from its wanderings in shameful penitence, to be greeted with a kiss, and clothed again, and feasted, and hear its Father say, "O dead, thou art alive again!" *Bushnell.*

3. Here is great *courage* for the time to come. "*Experience breeds hope and confidence.*" David was not so courageous a man of himself; but upon experience of God's former comfort and assistance, his faith brake as fire out of the smoke, or as the sun out of a cloud. He that seeth God by a spirit of faith in His greatness and power, he sees all other things below as nothing. Therefore, he saith here, he cares not for the time to come for any opposition; no, not of an army. "If God be with us, who can be against us?" *Sibbes.*—Those who are willing to be combatants *for* God, shall also be more than conquerors *through* God. None are so truly courageous as those who are truly religious. If a Christian live, he knows by whose might he stands; and if he die, he knows for whose sake he falls. Where there is no confidence *in* God, there will be no continuance with God. *W. Secker.*

4. One thing. Changes, great changes, and many bereavements there have been in my life. But one thing has never failed—one thing makes me feel that my life has been *one*; it has calmed my joys, it has soothed my sorrows, it has guided me in difficulty, it has strengthened me in weakness. It is the *presence* of God—a faithful and loving God. The presence of God is not only *light*, it is *unity*. It gives *unity* to the heart that believes it—*unity* to the life that is conformed to it. It was the presence of God in David's soul that enabled him to say, "*One thing have I desired of the Lord;*" and in Paul's that enabled him to say, "This one thing I do." *George Wagner*.—This "*one thing*," that David desires, is in effect that one thing needful that Christ speaks of in the Gospel; which Mary makes choice of there, as David doth here. *R. Baker*.

A lifelong residence in Jehovah's house, and therefore an intimate inward intercourse with the God who has His dwelling, His residence in the holy tent, is the one heart's desire of David, so that he may delight himself by gazing upon the gracious revelation of Him that can be seen there by the spiritual eye. *D.*—His one desire is not to be freed from foes and dangers, but to have more intimate fellowship and communion with God. This was his one cherished wish, which he carried in prayer to Him who alone could grant it. *One thing have I desired*, literally, asked, *of Jehovah*. And this he would continue to seek after, seek by prayer and by all the appointed means. *That I may dwell in the house of Jehovah*: be received as a member of His family, not an occasional or temporary guest, but a permanent resident. The reference is not to attendance upon public worship at the sanctuary so much as to the symbolic meaning of that sacred edifice. It was the dwelling-place of God, where His presence was continually manifested. The Psalmist wished to live with God, to be ever near Him, to have the constant sense of His presence and favor. And this he would do, not merely on Sabbath days or special occasions, not merely for a brief period, but *all the days of my life*. *W. H. G.*

Such happiness had he experienced in the service of God in His tabernacle, such peace and joy had he found there, that there, if it might have been, he would have chosen always to remain. For there God vouchsafed to dwell; there He manifested His immediate presence; there David seemed, as it were, to abide under the very shadow of the Almighty. The supreme blessedness of a life entirely devoted, like that of the priests, to the service of God, seems

often to have forced itself upon the minds of the holy Psalmists, and upon none more than upon that of David, who was compelled so often to wander at a distance from the sanctuary. There is the same feeling here of the perfect security and abounding happiness of such a dwelling-place as in Psalm 23:6. Indeed, the two Psalms have much in common. *P.*

Prayer, praise, thanksgiving, contemplation, are the peculiar privilege and duty of a Christian, and that for their own sakes; from the exceeding comfort and satisfaction they afford him, and without reference to any definite results to which prayer tends, and without reference to the answers promised to it, from a general sense of the blessedness of being under the shadow of God's throne. *Newman*.—His deepest desire was that he might "dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life," an impossible wish, if he meant nothing more thereby than bodily participation and presence in the ritual worship of an external sanctuary. He meant that, but he meant it for the sake of what *it* meant, and that was union with God in faith and love, in aspiration and desire. Communion with God is true blessedness. Without it there is none. To live near Him, to have His dear name sealed upon our hearts so to keep all their springs pure; to bear constant regard to Him in all acts, and to have thoughts of Him flowing in unbroken current through our lives, like the clear streams that run through the dusty streets of some cities—this is the secret of all life being blessed. *A. M.*

Communion and fellowship with God is that *one thing*, which if a Christian has, he needs desire no more; that we should all desire and desire again, and that is enough even to satisfy us, the fruition of God, and the beholding of Him in His ordinances, in His temple, to have correspondency and fellowship and communion with Him. Now this is so infinitely sweet, that it was the Psalmist's only desire, and the sum of all his desires here, and therefore much more in the tabernacle of heaven, which doth make up the consummation and completeness of all our happiness. *J. Stoughton*.

Beauty of the Lord. The several perfections which co-exist and unite in the nature of God produce a glorious beauty. Holiness is beautiful; mercy is beautiful; truth is beautiful. But, over and above, there is a beauty which belongs to such combinations and harmonies as the Psalmist describes, when he tells us, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and

Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. Thy righteousness is like the great mountains ; thy judgments are a great deep." *A. Gray.*

To inquire in His temple. The more grace the more business ye will find ye have to do with God in His ordinances ; little grace hath little to do, and much grace hath much to do ; he hath always business with God, special, earnest business. *R. Steele.*—Not seeking sinners alone, but assured saints should be inquirers. We must inquire as to the will of God and how we may do it ; as to our interest in the heavenly city, and how we may be more assured of it. We shall not need to make inquiries in heaven, for there we shall know even as we are known ; but meanwhile we should sit at Jesus' feet, and awaken all our faculties to learn of Him. *S.*

We shall never see the glory of that light which dwells between the cherubim, if our visits to the shrine are brief and interrupted, and the bulk of our time is spent outside the tabernacle amid the glaring sand and the blazing sunshine. The Psalmist desired to "dwell in the house of the Lord *all the days of his life*, that he might behold the beauty of the Lord"—for he knew that only such continuousness of abode would fit his eyes to see the light, and attune his ears to hear the voice of answer to him inquiring in the temple. Let us *fix* our eyes on Him—our Lord. Surely there is enough there to draw and satisfy the most prolonged eager gaze. He is our Example, our Redeemer, our Prophet. In Him we see all of God that man can apprehend, and all of man. In Him we behold our wisdom, our strength, our righteousness. We may gaze on Him with the confident look of faith, with the submission of obedience, with the rapture of love. *A. M.*

5. By *his tent*, as appears from the preceding verse, we are to understand the tabernacle, not considered merely as a place of public worship, but as Jehovah's earthly residence, His mansion. In the last clause the idea of protection is conveyed by an entirely different figure, that of a person placed upon a high rock beyond the reach of danger. *A.*—God's sanctuary is a sheltering asylum on a hill, where Jehovah safely guards him who flees thither, from the storms of trouble without ; there he is inaccessible to any dangers ; he has them far beneath him, and his feet rest on a rock. *D.*—The gracious presence of God, His power, His promise, His readiness to hear prayer, the witness of His Spirit in the hearts of His people ; these are the secret of His tabernacle, and in these the saints find cause for that holy security and se-

renity of mind in which they dwell at ease. This sets them up upon a rock which will not sink under them, but on which they find firm footing for their hopes ; nay, it sets them upon a rock on high, where the raging, threatening billows of a stormy sea cannot touch them ; it is a rock that is *higher than we* (61 : 2). *H.*

The time of trouble. Though God does not always deliver His people out of trouble, yet He delivers them from the evil of trouble, the despair of trouble, by supporting the spirit ; nay, He delivers by trouble, for He sanctifies the trouble to cure the souls, and by less troubles delivers from greater. *D. M.*—How blessed it is to have a friend in God ! How supremely wretched to have no place where to hide till the storm be overblown—no secret pavilion into which we may run from the strife of tongues ! To depend, in the last extremity, on selfish human nature, is like the dependence of an army marching on the undermined soil, which rings hollow to every tread. God is a Friend for adversity, unwearied, of the utmost tenderness, patient in bearing with the wildest caprices and the manifold infirmities of those whom He admits into the sacred relation of friendship. He places Himself before His creatures in this endearing character. He invites them to enter into an eternal covenant of friendship. He pledges His own existence that He will fulfil its conditions. A *faithful* God has been His characteristic from the beginning. An all-sufficient voucher of His sincerity He has given in the blood of His Son. *B. B. Edwards.*

7-12. As in so many Psalms of David, there follows a rapid and complete change of tone. So long as the Psalmist fixes his thoughts wholly on God's grace and promise, he has no feeling but joy and exultation ; but when he reverts to his own state he is brought at once to his knees in earnest, almost plaintive prayers.

8. The original runs thus, word for word : "To Thee said my heart, *in answer to Thy command*, 'Seek ye My face ;' Thy face, O Lord, will I seek." The Psalmist hears the voice of invitation, his heart accepts and answers it ; and, in order to express the completeness and promptitude of his acceptance, he puts the command and answer in direct juxtaposition. In plain unimpassioned prose the thought would be thus expressed : "Seek ye My face," that is the invitation which my heart heard, and answered at once, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." The heart pleads the command and invitation ; it addresses itself at once to God ; this, it says, is what I heard ; when I heard, I answered and obeyed. *Cook.*—The true nature of religious

worship is seeking the face of God ; this it is in God's precept, *Seek ye My face*. He would have us seek Him for Himself, and make His favor our chief good ; and this it is in the saint's purpose and desire, "*Thy face, Lord, will I seek* ; and nothing less will I take up with." The opening of His hand will satisfy the desire of other living things, but it is only the shining of His face that will satisfy the desire of a living soul. H.

We have here, summed up in a kind of dialogue of two phrases, the whole speech of God to us men, and the inmost meaning of all that devout souls say to God. "*Seek ye My face*"—such is the essential meaning of all God's words and works. "*Thy face, Lord, will I seek*"—such is the essential meaning of all prayer, worship, and obedience. A. M.—What is prayer but speaking to God—and what are answers from heaven but God's reply to us? And wherever, therefore—in the study, the street, or in any toil or pursuit of the world, or amid the array of this world's difficulties—wherever you may be, you can pour out the heart in expressions of desire or gratitude, of need or weakness, of praise and longing. Wherever such expressions rise from the heart, they are more precious than when they are statedly expressed at morning dawn and at evening close because they are the spontaneous, the unprovoked expressions of a heart that in its silent depths is in communion with God, and lets forth only the incidental evidences of its deep and solemn, but silent, intercourse maintained within. *Cumming*.

Seek my face. The heart of all His self-revelation by speech and by deed is the gracious call to come to His brightness and be at rest. By the very make of our spirits, which bear on them alike in their weakness and their strength the sign that they are His, and can only be at rest in Him, He says, "*Seek ye My face*." By all His providences of joy or sorrow, by disappointments and fulfilments, by hopes and fruitions, by losses and gains, by all the alternations which "*toss us to His breast*," He says, "*Seek ye My face*." And most of all in Jesus Christ, the true "*angel of His face*," in whom all the lustre of His radiance is gathered, does He beckon us to Himself. The highest, most loving, most beseeching form of that wonderful invitation, "*Seek ye My face*," is the call of Him in whose face we see the glory of God as we see it nowhere besides : "*Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden*." So He speaks to the whole world. So He speaks to each of us. So He speaks to me by Christ, who

is the dearest utterance of His love and the express image of His person. A. M.

The knowledge of God begins by looking unto Jesus. It grows by abiding in His presence and keeping up communion with Him. As soon as we come to Him we receive something of His Spirit, and are able to understand a little. As we stay with Him and walk with Him we receive more and more of His Spirit, and are able to understand more and more ; for the two processes go on hand in hand. The more we see of the Divine in Him, the more we receive of the Divine in ourselves ; and, conversely, the more we receive of the Divine in ourselves, the more we see of the Divine in Him. By equal steps, step by step, no one can tell which is the first. *J. M. Gibson*.

When does God say, "*Seek ye My face* "? He says it especially in the way and at the time that our heart is most disposed to hear it. In your first real trouble His heart begins to touch your heart in a secret way, and His living presence is pleading, "*Seek ye My face*." The world cannot help you and comfort you. The deeper instincts of your heart spring up in the day of trouble toward God, and God sees it, for you are palpitating within yourself to meet His face. *J. Pulsford*.—Such is the experience of those who seek and find God. Their aching heart seizes upon some precious words of Divine invitation and promise ; they think of them as the words of God ; and then their heart goes out in trustful, grateful response—"Thy face, Lord, will I seek." C.—Note the *firm* and *decisive* resolution shining through the very brevity of the words. The original gives that brevity even more strongly. Three words suffice to hold the law which the man has made for the pole-star of his life. Fixed resolves need short professions. What a contrast that clear, self-conscious, firm resolution is to the hesitations and indecisions so common among us ! How few of us could honestly crystallize the aims that guide our life into any single sentence ! A. M.

If you would make a call effectual, you must receive it into the innermost recesses of your soul and recognize and feel the nature of the claim which He who speaks has upon you to whom He calls. Remember that it is the right of an absolute Sovereign. But it is not in sovereignty only, it is in love He has called you. All you have to do is to let yourselves be placed within those majestic influences of His powerful affection, that you may be drawn in and toward the centre. Another most important part of the right reception of the call lies in the

quickness, the instantaneousness of the obedience: "When Thou saidst." The appeal and the reply are coeval. There is a "Now or never" in God's calls. God's calls and invitations are not always such things as we should have expected. They often fall strangely. Upon our faithfulness to each one in succession depend the vividness and the power with which the other will fall. There is one thing which appears to characterize every call; *i.e.*, a call to action. There is always something to be done, and to do the act is to accept the call. J. V.

God pours upon a man a spirit of grace and supplication, a praying disposition; He puts in motives, suggests arguments and pleas to God; all which you shall find come in readily and of themselves, and that likewise with a quickening heat and enlargement of affection, and with a longing and restlessness of spirit to be alone, to pour out the soul to God, and to vent and form those motions and suggestions into a prayer, till you have laid them together and made a prayer of them. And this is a speaking to the heart. Observe such times when God doth thus and neglect them not, then to strike while the iron is hot; thou hast then His ear. *T. Goodwin.*—God is never better pleased than when His people importune Him in His own words, and urge Him with arguments taken from His own promises. *T. Brooks.*

9. We have in v. 8 God's voice to the heart and the heart's echo to that voice, and here the heart's cry to God, founded on both the Divine voice and the human echo. What God has been saying to him in days that are no more, and what he has been saying to God, are planted like the two piers of an arch, that from them may rise heavenward the prayer and the hope, "Hide not Thy face far from me;" "Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation." A. M.—"*Thy face, Lord, will I seek, in obedience to Thy command; therefore hide not Thy face from me; let me never want the reviving sense of Thy favor; love me and let me know that Thou lovest me; put not Thy servant away in anger.*" He owns he had deserved God's displeasure, but begs that however God might correct him He would not cast him away from His presence. H.

Love works in believing hearts toward its beloved object. It cannot bear distance from Christ. The dread of it makes the soul plead and fills the mouth with arguments, lest the heart should lose the sweet sense and comfort of His love. "Thou hast been my help." Past

experiences of love and power are remembered, and pleaded for present help and future hope. God's precious promises of faithfulness and truth cannot be forgotten. Past mercies are recalled. "Forsake me not." Why? Because: "Thou art the God of my salvation." To whom should we go, but to Thee, O Jesus? Forsake not the work of Thine own hands; the soul for whom Thou didst toil, suffer, and die. Recall my wandering steps. Revive my drooping spirit. Bring near Thy salvation in present peace and love. Such are the pleadings of loving hearts, springing from the faith which worketh by love. It ever hath God in Christ for its object, His faithfulness and truth its support, His promises its pleas, His glory its aim, and the comforting sense of His love its portion and heaven. *W. Mason.*

10. *For my father and my mother have left me, and Jehovah will take me in.* Parents are here put for the nearest friends, whose loss or desertion is frequently complained of in the Psalms as one of the most painful signs of desolation. The first clause may also be translated, *when my father and my mother have left me, then the Lord will take me in.* The last expression is applied to the compassionate reception of strangers or wanderers into one's house. The case described is an ideal one, and may be thus expressed in paraphrase. "The kindness of the nearest earthly friends may cease by death or desertion (for the verb to *leave* may comprehend both); but the Lord's compassions cannot fail." A.—This verse simply expresses, in a well-known proverbial form, the thought that even were he forsaken by all who loved him most tenderly God would never give him up. The force and beauty of such an appeal depend upon the feeling that a parent's love is the strongest bond that can bind man to man, yet incomparably weaker than that which binds him to God. *Cook.*

Why *both* named—*father* and *mother*, too? Partly because it can hardly be imagined that both of them should forsake their child, though one should hap to be unkind. Partly, because the *father's* love being commonly with more *providence*, the *mother's* with more *tenderness*; both together do better express than alone either would do, the abundant love of God toward us, who is infinitely dear over us, beyond the care of the most provident father, beyond the affection of the tenderest mother. *R. Sanderson.*

The excellence of the Hebrew devotional hymns has never been surpassed. Heathenism, Christianity, with all their science, arts, literature, bright and many-colored, have little that

approaches these. They are the despair of imitators ; still the uttered prayer of the Christian world. Tell us of Greece, whose air was redolent of song ; its language such as Jove might speak ; its sages, heroes, poets, honored in every clime—they have no Psalm of prayer and praise like these Hebrews, the devoutest of men, who saw God always before them, ready to take them up when father and mother let them fall.”

Theodore Parker.

11, 12. He wanders about presently like a hunted deer ; but God can so guide him that he may escape all dangers. That is what he asks. Cunning spies follow all his steps, and would rejoice if they saw what they planned and wished come to pass. Should he slide into the way of sin leading to destruction, that would be to God’s dishonor, just as on the other hand it is a point of honor with God not to allow His servant to fall. Hence he prays that he may be led in God’s way ; for oneness of one’s own will with the Divine renders one invulnerable. D.—Righteous David saw many who were waiting to triumph in his mistakes ; hence the more they watched, the more he prayed : “Teach me Thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.” It may be rendered, *because of mine observers*. Men are merciless in their censures of Christians ; they have no sympathy for their infirmity : while God weighs them in more equal scales, and says, “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” While a saint is a *dove* in the eyes of God, he is only a *raven* in the estimation of sinners. *W. Secker.*

The expression is not “Show me Thy way,” but “Teach me Thy way.” Showing may be an instantaneous act, but teaching is a process. We learn gradually ; we learn by study ; we learn by effort ; we learn by discipline. It is no little thing you ask, and it is no little submission and work and faith that you commit yourself to, when you say to God, “Teach me Thy way.” J. V.—While in the general we set God’s will before us as our rule, we may lawfully pray that he will by hints of providence direct us in the way of our duty, and give us indications what His mind is. Thus He guides His people and leads them in a plain path. H.

The leading of God when we are in the way, is to be looked for by us in and through His ordinary providence. If you are in the way of duty, of faith and of prayer, be sure that somehow through the common incidents of your life He will guide your feet into the right path. *W. M. Taylor.*—God’s rule is the same in

providence that it is in grace. By any and by all means He will draw us ; force us, never. Surely we may see this in the word “lead.” No one is compelled to follow a guide. The plain fact is, that Divine Providence is to us just what we suffer it to be. *Bishop Thorold.*

13. The words “I had fainted” are not in the original. The sentence is a broken one, such as one utters under strong emotion, suggesting possibilities, but leaving the hearer or reader to supply them for himself. “O had I not believed to see the goodness of Jehovah in the land of the living”—and then he breaks off, and we are left to imagine what dreadful thing would have happened. “Unless I had *believed* to see the goodness of the Lord.” God’s goodness is often a matter of faith rather than of sight. We are prone to take it for granted that God’s goodness must always come into our lives like ripened fruit ; whereas, as a fact, it often comes into them like a seed which takes time to grow. “Light is *sown* for the righteous.” And we shall find that the richest developments of God’s goodness are of this character. V.

It is not hard to believe in the Divine goodness when all things are joyous. The hard thing is to believe in it just as firmly and quietly when all things seem against us. The goodness of God is just as surely and as richly revealed in the dark things of providence as in the bright things. We write some things as “prosperous” and some as “adverse.” God writes “goodness” over all. J. R. M.

Unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. A cordial made up of three sovereign ingredients—a hope *to see* ; and to see *the goodness of God* ; and the goodness of God *in the land of the living*. *R. Baker.*—His goodness sets His mighty power a-work for His suffering saints. His goodness sets His all-sufficiency, His fulness, abroad for them, so that it runs freely upon them ; and never more freely than when they are under the cross. *D. Clarkson.*—They have an invisible Friend always near them. He supports them by His power under all their trials and conflicts, revives their spirits with the consolations of His Word ; and when He brings them out of their troubles, then how sweetly do they sing of Him ! How many a joyful Psalm, what a rich treasury of experience, did the pen of David indite to the glory of his God and the comfort of his Father’s children in after ages ! He believed, therefore he spake. Unless he had believed he had fainted. Faith will support when all things else fail. It looks to the Word, and trusts in an al-

mighty, faithful, covenant-keeping God. Faith consults not flesh and blood, but the Word of grace and truth. As faith is the support of the soul, God's Word is the warrant of faith, and Jesus the object, author, strength, and finisher of faith. *W. Mason.*

In the land of the living. That means the land which is the sphere of sight and touch ; the land where the goodness of God or its withdrawal concerns us more immediately. It is the land where not only you live, trying to serve God in your living, and receiving the goodness of God with a thankful and humble heart, but where the wicked live in rebellion against God ; where sin, and its family of falsehoods, murders, cruelties, extortions, and oppressions live and thrive ; where the purpose of God is working itself out through this complexity of factors known as life, slowly seeking an adjustment and a triumphant result out of the clashing of human wills, the conflict of selfish interests, the struggle between ignorance and knowledge, and between good and evil. It is this problem which troubles us. A good man is not usually disturbed about God's goodness beyond this world. He takes it for granted, indeed, that there every cloud will be dispelled and every hard question settled. It is God's goodness in the land of the living which sometimes puzzles him. The land of the living meant to the Psalmist, as we see by reading the rest of this Psalm, hosts that encamped against him ; enemies and foes that pressed on to eat up his flesh ; the being forsaken by his nearest of kin, and at the mercy of false witnesses and of such as breathe out cruelty. In such a land as this, if a man attempts to live by sight only, he will inevitably be discouraged and beaten. Life is a problem which sense cannot resolve. On its face it seems constantly to contradict the goodness of God. The goodness of God in the land of the living is the hard question which has persisted in coming to the surface from the time that men began to think about God. And yet the fact of such goodness visible in the world and in human life is assumed by the Psalmist. He has faith in it. He believed to see it in the land of the living. Just in this steady hold lies the secret of escape from faintness and despair ; just in this *believing* to see where we cannot see. Faith hears a voice of love through the thunder. To faith the word which sounds "disaster" means "goodness." V.

The land of the living. Alas ! what a *land of the living* is this, in which there are more dead than living, where the earth is fuller of

graves than houses ; where life lies trembling under the hand of death ; and where death hath power to tyrannize over life ! No, my soul, *there only* is the *land of the living* where there are none but the living ; where life is not passive, nor death active ; where life sits crowned, and where death is swallowed up in victory. *R. Baker.*—There is living grace for the living day ? A living Saviour, and a living, quickening Spirit, to meet the living soul ? A living Providence, "full of eyes before and behind," to watch working and growing souls ? A living love of God filling all the world like the light of the longest summer day ? Trust to the living things, above all to the living Lord, for because He lives you shall live also. *Raleigh.*

14. In view of the truth that the goodness of God is an immutable, eternal, universal fact in this land of the living with all its confusion and contradiction, only one counsel is possible ; and that the Psalmist gives us along with a promise : "Wait on the Lord ! Be brave ! He shall strengthen thine heart." To wait on the Lord is to serve Him. In all the confusion and sorrow we are to be constant to duty. We are called to serve God under all circumstances whatsoever. We are to trust Him to adjust the circumstances to the service. Do you hold it as a mark of God's goodness that He calls and permits you to serve Him ? Then believe that the service is good all through. You are serving God, and God will take care that service shall be a good and a wholesome thing, both in itself and in its fruits, whether it be service in the dark or in the light, in calm or in storm. V.

Take courage. True courage in its finer elements includes strength of heart ; strength to endure, as well as attack ; to pursue and achieve, as well as to attempt ; to sacrifice self altogether, if need be, on behalf of any controlling conviction. A thorough consent of judgment, conscience, imagination, affection, all vitalized and active ; with a certain invincible firmness of will, as the effect of such a consent—this is implied in a really abounding and masterful courage. It is not impatient. It is not imperious. It is not the creature of fractious and vehement will-power in man. It is never allied with a passionate selfishness. It is associated with great convictions ; has its roots in profound moral experiences ; is nourished by thoughts of God and the hereafter. It is as sensitive and gentle in spirit as it is persistent and highly resolved. It forms the base of sympathies, generousities, rather than of defiance. Such courage as this is everywhere at home,

and is naturally master of all situations. And wherever it is shown it has in it something of the morally superlative. Men recognize a force which emergencies cannot startle, nor catastrophes overbear ; which possesses immeasurable calmness and strength ; with which no intellectual faculties or acquired accomplishments can be compared, but from which all such take a value and splendor not their own. R. S. S.

Yea, wait thou on the Lord. Here is the true highest type of a troubled soul's fellowship with God, when the black fear and consciousness of weakness is enclosed in a golden ring of happy trust. Let the name of our God be first upon our lips, and the call to our wayward hearts to wait on Him be last, and then we may between think of our loneliness, and feebleness, and foes, and fears, without losing our hold of our Father's hand. A. M.

Waiting is about the hardest duty of the child of God, and it is about his commonest duty. The Lord tells us to wait, and we ought to tell ourselves to wait ; to wait patiently, to wait courageously, to wait trustfully, to wait submissively. H. C. T.—To wait on the Lord is to hold the heart open for what God gives ; and so it implies subjection. It is to expect His love ; and so it implies the penitence that goes before pardon. It is to believe He will give and guide ; and so it implies faith. It is to hold all insubordinate and hasty impulses in restraint ; and so it implies self-renunciation. It is to ask for His coming ; and so it implies prayer. It

is to rejoice in His presence ; and so it implies thanksgiving. Subjection, penitence, faith, self-renouncement, prayer, thanksgiving—these are not elements of man's infirmity. F. D. H.

Not frames and feelings, but God's love and promises in Christ to sinners, are the foundation of hope. These are abundantly sufficient to inspire the soul with courage, yea, with good courage, to go on in the ways of the Lord. God has promised ; expect fulfilment. Here is the exercise of faith, trust in the Lord Christ for what we stand in need of ; of hope, expecting to receive all from Him ; of patience, waiting continually upon Him. Most precious promise ! "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, walk and not faint" (Isa. 40 : 31). *W. Mason.*

Faith sets hope a-work. The heir must believe his title to an estate in reversion, before he can hope for it ; faith believes its title to glory, and then hope waits for it. Did not faith feed the lamp of hope with oil, it would soon die. Faith sets love a-work, "Faith which worketh by love ;" believing the mercy and merit of Christ causeth a flame of love to ascend. Faith sets patience a-work, "Be followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promise." Faith believes the glorious rewards given to suffering. This makes the soul patient in suffering. Thus faith is the master-wheel, it sets all the other graces a-running. *Watson.*

PSALM XXVIII.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

- 1 UNTO thee, O LORD, will I call ;
My rock, be not thou deaf unto me :
Lest, if thou be silent unto me,
I become like them that go down into the
pit.
- 2 Hear the voice of my supplications, when I
cry unto thee,
When I lift up my hands toward thy holy
oracle.
- 3 Draw me not away with the wicked,
And with the workers of iniquity ;
Which speak peace with their neighbours,
But mischief is in their hearts.

- 4 Give them according to their work, and ac-
cording to the wickedness of their doings :
Give them after the operation of their hands ;
Render to them their desert.
- 5 Because they regard not the works of the
LORD,
Nor the operation of his hands,
He shall break them down and not build them
up.
- 6 Blessed be the LORD,
Because he hath heard the voice of my sup-
plications.

7 The LORD is my strength and my shield ;
My heart hath trusted in him, and I am
helped :
Therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth ;
And with my song will I praise him.

8 The LORD is a strength unto his people ;
And he is a strong hold of salvation to his
anointed.
9 Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance :
Feed them also, and bear them up for ever.

THIS Psalm suits the period of David's life before he became king in Jerusalem. There is nothing in it to determine the precise occasion on which it was composed. It consists of two parts. The first five verses contain a prayer for deliverance from the portion of sinners, and for retribution on the wicked. The remaining four, after thanksgiving, end with a prayer for the people of God. M.

1. When God seems to close His ear, we must not therefore close our mouths, but rather cry with more earnestness ; for He will not long deny us a hearing. We *must* have answers to prayer ; ours is an urgent case of dire necessity ; surely the Lord will speak peace to our agitated minds. S.—To the request of the Syrophœnician woman, it is said, Christ “*answered* not a word,” but it is not said, He *heard* not a word. These two differ much. Christ often heareth when He doth not answer—His *not* answering *is* an answer, and speaks thus—“Pray on, go on and cry, for the Lord holdeth His door fast bolted,” not to keep you out, but that you may knock, and knock, and it shall be opened. *Rutherford*.

2. The word translated *oracle* is derived from the verb to speak, and seems to mean a place of speaking or conversation, like the English *parlor* from the French *parler*. Now we learn from Ex. 25 : 22, Num. 7 : 89, that the place whence God talked with Moses was the inner apartment of the tabernacle ; and from 1 Kings 6 : 19, that the corresponding part of the temple bore the name here used. To this, as the depository of the ark and the earthly residence of God, the ancient saints looked as we look now to Christ, in whom the idea of the Mosaic sanctuary has been realized. A.—“Oracle” is one of the names for the most holy place where the visible glory (the Shechinah) reposed on the cover of the ark beneath the cherubim. The Hebrew word comes from a verb which is used abundantly in the sense to *speak*, and hence might most naturally mean the place from which God spake to His people. This corresponds so perfectly with the historic facts respecting the inner sanctuary—the place where God spake with Moses—as to leave little room to question the origin and significance of this name. C.

Lift up my hands. Uplifted hands have

ever been a form of devout posture, and are intended to signify a reaching upward toward God, a readiness, an eagerness to receive the blessing sought after. We stretch out empty hands, for we are beggars ; we lift them up, for we seek heavenly supplies ; we lift them toward the mercy seat of Jesus, for there our expectation dwells. S.

4. Having prayed that he may not share the destruction of the wicked, he now prays that they may not escape it. But as this is merely asking God to act as a just and holy being must act, the charge of vindictive cruelty is not merely groundless but absurd. A.—In this instance certainly there is no trace of the expression of personal animosity and the mere desire of revenge. It is rather an appeal to God's justice to deal with the righteous and the wicked according to their deserts. P.—David pleads here not so much his own cause as the cause of God. And by this prayer he further reminds both himself and the faithful, that although the wicked may give themselves loose reins in the commission of every species of vice with impunity, for a time, they must at length stand before the judgment-seat of God. *Calvin*.

5. Mark carefully the reasons why they so richly deserve this doom—viz., because when they might see God they *will not* ; when they might study the works of His hand and the retributions of His providence and might by such means learn His wisdom, justice, power, and love, they will not regard these works of His—will give no thought to their moral lessons—will neither know, love, nor obey the Great God ! Therefore God will tear them down and not build them up—a figure which conceives of them as a house or a castle—not to be made more firm, but to be overthrown. Paul gives the same reason for the condemnation of the godless heathen : “Because when they knew God they did not glorify Him as God” (Rom. 1 : 21) ; *i.e.*, in so far as they did know Him, they withheld from Him due honor and obedience ; and because they might, but would not, know Him more, and would not give Him the honor they knew to be His due. Isaiah has the same words (5 : 12) of the wicked who give themselves up to thoughtless and thought killing revelry, utterly reckless of God and of all His manifestations of Himself in His works.

It should be carefully noted that this doom is not pronounced on beings who have in their created constitution no capacity for knowing God ; nor are they condemned for not knowing an *unrevealed* God—one who has neither said nor done anything by which they might know Him. On the contrary, the wicked men of our world have both the capacity and the means of knowing God their Maker and Father. Therefore “this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and yet they have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil” (John 3 : 19). Hence the obvious and perfect justice of their doom. C.

Why do men forget God, and live without Him ; nay, affront God, and live in rebellion against Him, but because they consider not the instances of that wrath of His which is revealed *from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men* ? Why do the enemies of God’s people hate and persecute them, and devise mischief against them, but because they regard not the works God has wrought for His Church, by which He has made it appear how dear it is to Him ? H.

6. In his own heart he has already received the answer to his prayer. He knows that God will fulfil his petitions, and therefore breaks out, in the glad certainty of faith, “Blessed be Jehovah,” etc. The certainty that prayer is heard anticipates its visible fulfilment. P.—*God had heard the voice of his supplications.* They that pray in faith may rejoice in hope. “He hath heard me (graciously accepted me), and I am as sure of a real answer as if I had it already.” What we win by prayer, we must wear with praise. Has God heard our supplications ? Let us then bless His name. · H.

7. The strength of Christ is made over to us by faith, for so the Scripture saith frequently, *The Lord is our strength* ; and therefore is Christ’s strength ours, made over unto us, that we may be able to bear whatsoever lies upon us. *Isaac Ambrose*.—“*The Lord is my strength*” inwardly, “*and my shield*” outwardly. Faith finds both these in Jehovah, and the one not without the other, for what is a shield without strength, or strength without a shield ? “*My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped* ;” the idea of the former sentence is here carried out, that outward help was granted to inward confidence. *W. Wilson*.—Faith substantiateth things not yet seen ; it altereth the tenses, saith one, and putteth the future into the present tense as here. *Trapp*.

My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped. Heart work is sure work ; heart

trust is never disappointed. Faith must come before help, but help will never be long behind hand. Every day the believer may say, “I am helped,” for the Divine assistance is vouchsafed us every moment ; when more manifest help is needed, we have but to put faith into exercise, and it will be given us. “*Therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth ; and with my song will I praise Him.*” The heart is mentioned twice to show the truth of his faith and his joy. Observe the adverb “*greatly*,” we need not be afraid of being too full of rejoicing at the remembrance of grace received. We serve a great God, let us greatly rejoice in Him. S.—The joy of a believer is seated in the heart, while in the laughter of the fool, the heart is sorrowful. It is great joy, joy unspeakable, and full of glory. The heart that truly believes shall in due time greatly rejoice ; it is joy and peace in believing that we are to expect. God shall have the praise of it ; when *my heart greatly rejoices, with my song will I praise Him*. Thus must we express our gratitude ; it is the least we can do ; and others will hereby be invited and encouraged to trust in Him, too. H.

There is a sense of holy relationship to God—a sense by which He who builded and guides the universe becomes the guardian of our interests ; His power, wisdom, universal presence and universal government become the guarantee of our security. Sometimes there is a sweet and triumphant sense of this in the midst of the utmost peril and sorrow. There is a consciousness that He who governs all things from the infinite throne will make our very sorrow work for our glory—work for the welfare of others through us ; work for our own more triumphant peace and more happy and holy vision in the world beyond. This sense of security springs from the assurance that nothing can harm him who, through the Son of God, has been affiliated with God Himself, and who has omnipotence for his defence and his shield. . . . And there is no human experience that can rival or approximate that which the soul feels when it comes to God in this consciousness of fellowship with Him—fellowship in thought, in character, in plan and in experience. Then it comes with filial confidence, uttering its requests before the Almighty as freely as if His omnipotence was no grander than our weakness, and His omniscience no vaster than our ignorance. That sense of fellowship with God is found in the experience of those who have wrought most and suffered most and conquered most in His service and for His sake. In *that* is joy, surpassing all joy of music, all delights of friendship ; surpassing all

other joys known on the earth ; a gleam of the celestial breaking into the darkness of the world ! R. S. S.

8. David thinks first of all of the people, then of himself ; for his personality retreats behind his office, in virtue of which he is Israel's head. For that very reason his deliverance is the deliverance of Israel, to whom so far as they have become unfaithful to His anointed, Jehovah has requited this unfaithfulness, and to whom so far as they have remained faithful to him, He has rewarded this fidelity. D.

The saints rejoice in their friends' comforts as well as their own ; for as we have not the less benefit by the light of the sun, so neither by the light of God's countenance, for others sharing therein ; for we are sure there is enough for all, and enough for each. This is our communion with all saints, that God is their strength and ours ; Christ their Lord and ours. H.—

The heavenly experience of one believer is a pattern of the life of all. To all the militant Church, without exception, Jehovah is the same as He was to His servant David, "The least of them shall be as David." They need the same aid and they shall have it, for they are loved with the same love, written in the same book of life, and one with the same anointed Head. S.

9. Israel's salvation and blessing were at stake, but Israel is God's people and God's inheritance—may He then work salvation for them, and bless them throughout all the future. D. — **Thy people, Thine inheritance.** In those words are his plea with God. It is impossible not to see, in these tender, loving words, "Feed them and bear them," the heart of the shepherd-king. Feed them, O Thou true Shepherd of Israel ; bear them, carry them in Thine arms (Isa. 63 : 9 ; 40 : 11). P.

PSALM XXIX.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

- 1 GIVE unto the LORD, O ye sons of the mighty,
Give unto the LORD glory and strength.
- 2 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name ;
Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.
- 3 The voice of the LORD is upon the waters :
The God of glory thundereth,
Even the LORD upon many waters.
- 4 The voice of the LORD is powerful ;
The voice of the LORD is full of majesty.
- 5 The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars ;
Yea, the LORD breaketh in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.
- 6 He maketh them also to skip like a calf ;
Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild-ox.
- 7 The voice of the LORD cleaveth the flames of fire.
- 8 The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness ;
The LORD shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.
- 9 The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve,
And strippeth the forests bare :
And in his temple every thing saith, Glory.

THE PSALM OF THE SEVEN THUNDERS.

- 1 GIVE unto Jehovah, ye sons of God,
Give unto Jehovah glory and might !
- 2 Give unto Jehovah the glory of his name,
Pay homage to Jehovah in holy pomp !
- 3 The voice of Jehovah is upon the waters,
The God of glory thundereth,
Jehovah is upon the great waters.
- 4 The voice of Jehovah goeth forth in power,
The voice of Jehovah goeth forth in majesty.
- 5 The voice of Jehovah breaketh the cedars,
Yea, Jehovah breaketh the cedars of Lebanon,
- 6 And maketh them skip like a calf,
Lebanon and Sirion like a young antelope.
- 7 The voice of Jehovah flameth forth quivering fire.
- 8 The voice of Jehovah shaketh the wilderness,
Jehovah shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.
- 9 The voice of Jehovah maketh the hinds to calve,
He strippeth the forest—
And in his temple everything saith :
" Glory ! "

10 The LORD sat *as king* at the Flood ;
 Yea, the LORD sitteth as king for ever.
 11 The LORD will give strength unto his people ;
 The LORD will bless his people with peace.

10 Jehovah hath sat on the flood,
 And Jehovah sitteth a king for ever.
 11 Jehovah will give power to his people,
 Jehovah will bless his people with peace.
Delitzsch.

THE essential idea in this Psalm is the same as in the twenty-eighth, that God is the strength of His people, but clothed in a different costume, the Divine power being proved or exemplified by its exertion in the elements, and then applied, in the close, to the believer's consolation. The Psalmist first invokes the heavenly host to celebrate their sovereign's honor. He then describes Jehovah's voice as producing the most striking physical effects, and represents it as belonging to the same God who presided at the deluge and who now protects and will continue to protect and bless His people. The notion that this Psalm is *merely* a description of a thunder-storm or of Jehovah as the God of thunder, may be corrected by observing that the last verse gives the key-note of the whole composition. A.

This Psalm is a magnificent description of a thunder-storm. Its mighty march from north to south, the desolation and terror which it causes, the peal of the thunder, the flash of the lightning, even the gathering fury and lull of the elements, are vividly depicted. The Psalm consists of five parts: a prelude, the body of the poem in three divisions, and a conclusion. The structure of the whole is highly artificial, and elaborated with a symmetry of which no more perfect specimen exists in Hebrew. But this evidently artificial mode of composition is no check to the force and fire of the poet's genius, which kindles and glows and sweeps along with all the freedom and majesty of the storm; the whole Psalm being one continued strain of triumphant exultation.

In the prelude the singer lifts our thoughts at once from earth to heaven, by calling on the angels who stand around the throne of God to praise Him who manifests His glory in the thunder and lightning which He sends upon the earth (vs. 1, 2). Then follows the description of the storm in the three strophes which constitute the main body of the poem. These are so constructed that the first (vs. 3, 4) gives us the beginning of the storm, the low, faint, muttering thunder in the distant heavens; the next (vs. 5-7) describes the storm at its height, when it crashes the cedars and shakes the mountains; the last (vs. 8, 9) tells how it passes on over the plain country to the forest of Kadesh in the south, where it dies away.

But not only the arrangement of the three strophes, but the structure of each separate strophe, contributes in a very striking degree to the whole effect of the poem. Each consists of five members, and each begins with a fresh burst, and closes with a lull in the tempest. Thus, in the first strophe we hear the first, yet distant, sound of the thunder in the words: "The voice of Jehovah is upon the waters." In the next two clauses: "The God of glory thundereth; Jehovah is upon many waters," the long, loud peal grows more distinct, while v. 4 again is pitched in a lower key, as if telling us of a pause in the storm. In the next strophe we have again, first, the renewed fury of the tempest, as, coming nearer yet, it falls on the glory of Lebanon, and breaks her cedars in its might: "The voice of Jehovah breaketh the cedars," etc. Next, gathering with a wilder intensity of wrath, it bursts upon the mountain peaks, roaring amid their rocks and shattering them, and making the everlasting hills themselves to tremble as with the throes of an earthquake, so that "Lebanon and Sirion skip like young buffaloes." Lastly, we hear it sinking down in the line which describes the flashing of the forked lightning: "The voice of Jehovah cleaveth the flames of fire" (vs. 5-7). In the third strophe the same structure is observable. One long peal after another has rolled and reverberated along the sky, and now the storm, in its jubilant strength, sweeps the whole land from north to south. Again it is up in its majesty: "The voice of Jehovah maketh the wilderness to tremble." Again its last fury is poured out upon the wilderness of Kadesh. The very hinds bow themselves in travail-pangs, and the forest is torn open and laid bare, as the hurricane drives through it in its path. And again the tempest is stilled; but this time its voice is hushed and lost forever in the music and songs of the heavenly host: "In His temple all that are therein cry, Glory" (vs. 8, 9).

The conclusion consists, like the prelude, of two verses, each of two members. And here we are beautifully reminded that Jehovah, whom the angels praise, and who both *rules* and *stills* the elements in their wildest uproar, is the same Jehovah who gives *strength* and *peace* to His people (vs. 10, 11). P.

There are in this Psalm, properly speaking,

two scenes, each of which is the pendant of the other. One passes upon earth, where we see the raging hurricane. The colossal cedars of Lebanon are split in pieces; their gigantic trunks are torn from the ground, and leap as lightly as the ox in the meadow. The mountain itself groans and trembles, scourged by the tempest. The lightnings furrow a sky darker than the deepest night. Vast deserts, such as that of Kadesh, in the south of Canaan, where nothing stops the element, are swept by the hurricane. Their sand becomes a moving sea, the atmosphere an ocean chasing over its tossed bed and sweeping with it all which it meets in its passage. The trees which can resist are peeled and stripped bare. Beasts are seized with terror, and their convulsive shudderings make them anticipate the hour of nature. Man is nowhere in this description. He is mute, and retires before the terrible majesty of the spectacle. Above the horrible turmoil the Lord is seated majestically upon His throne. The flood which is about to sweep over the earth is the footstool of that throne. He contemplates it with a serene eye, and with His royal hand He will stay the elements when He pleases. Round Him the powers, which are His messengers, almost the priests of His heavenly sanctuary, clad in their sacred robes, press on to glorify Him. What a magnificent antithesis in a few lines! *Reuss.*

In their most literal and superficial expression, in words which no one can mistake, the Psalms set to music the first article of the Creed, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth," and supply it with an exuberant and attractive commentary. This many-voiced republication of natural religion, this vivid, impassioned, picturesque assertion of the existence and attributes of God is of priceless value. *Bishop Alexander.*—In the mind of the writers the sense of outward nature was entirely subordinated to that of the presence of the God of nature. The sense of the invisible was an overmastering passion with them. Nature was but the robe with which the King of kings arrayed Himself, and the thought of His glory overpowered and swallowed up all other considerations that did not centre in Him. From first to last it is the personal God, the everlasting, ever-present, but invisible He, before whom the writer bows with reverential awe, but yet with the most unswerving and unbounded confidence. *Leathes.*

1, 2. There are three *gives* in these two verses: "*Give unto the Lord, give unto the Lord, give unto the Lord the glory that is due unto His*

name." Glory is God's right and He stands upon His right; this the Christian knows and therefore gives Him His right; he gives Him the honor and the glory that is due unto His name. *T. Brooks.*

The sons of God are the beings intermediate between God and man, sometimes called *angels* in reference to their office. The same application of the same phrase occurs in Psalm 89: 6. A.—This Psalm has to do with a revelation of the power of the God who is enthroned in the heavens and who from there rules the world. And so the Psalm at its commencement addresses the heavenly spirits that surround the Ruler of the world. The begotten of God, *i.e.*, created in the image of God, who, with God their Father, form as it were one family ("the family above"), are here called upon willingly and joyfully to render back to Him in praises the acknowledgment of His glory and might, as these have been revealed and are yet to be revealed in the world He has created, and to give Him the glory of His name, *i.e.*, to praise His glorious name. D.

2. *Give to Jehovah the honor of His name; bow to Jehovah in beauty of holiness.* The honor of His name is that belonging to it, due to it. His name is His manifested nature. The verb in the last clause strictly means, bow down or prostrate yourselves in worship. A.—Religious worship is *giving to the Lord the glory due to His name.* God's name is that whereby He has made Himself known. It is impossible that we should give Him all the glory due to His name; but when we answer that revelation which He has made of Himself with suitable affections and adorations, then we give Him some of that glory which is due to His name. If we would, in hearing and praying and other acts of devotion, receive grace from God, we must make it our business to give glory to God. H.

3-7. Now follows the description of the revelation of God's power, which is the ground of the foregoing summons and is to be the subject of praise. The All-glorious One makes Himself heard in the voice of the thunder and reveals Himself in the storm. D.—Then the tempest breaks. It crashes and leaps through the short sentences, each like the clap of the near thunder. Seven times the roar shakes the world. The voice of the seven thunders is the voice of Jehovah. In the short clauses, with their uniform structure, the pause between, and the recurrence of the same initial words, we hear the successive peals, the silence that parts them, and the monotony of their unvaried sound.

Thrice we have the reverberation rolling through the sky or among the hills, imitated by clauses which repeat previous ones, as indicated by the italics, and one forked flame blazes out in the brief, lightning-like sentence, "The voice of Jehovah (is) hewing flashes of fire," which wonderfully gives the impression of their streaming fiercely forth, as if cloven from some solid block of fire. A. M.

3. The "waters" and the "many waters" of this verse must be that mass of waters supposed to be recumbent upon the firmament, gathered there (and ever after remaining) when in the process of creation God divided between the waters above and those beneath this firmament (Gen. 1 : 6, 7). The Lord is conceived to sit upon these superincumbent waters, and the thunder which roars in the lofty clouds of heaven is thought of as His voice above this ocean of the heavens ! C.

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters. The thunder is not only poetically but instructively called "the voice of God," since it peals from on high. There is peculiar terror in a tempest at sea, when deep calleth unto deep, and the raging sea echoes to the angry sky. No sound is more calculated to inspire a reverent awe than the roar of the storm. S.

5. The voice of the Lord—His mighty thunder—rends the cedars, yea, the Lord shivers to atoms the cedars of Lebanon. The cedar represents the strongest kind of trees then known ; those of Lebanon, the finest of their kind, yet none of these can withstand the might of Jehovah.

6. The parallel clause gives us Lebanon and Sirion (Hermon) and therefore favors the sense—the thunder shakes the very mountains. C.

7. With every thunder-peal comes the terrible forked lightning, so striking in tropical and Eastern lands. Its vivid, zigzag, serpent-like flash is given in a few words. *Cleaveth the flames of fire ; i.e.,* parts the blaze of the lightning, so as to give it the forked appearance.

8. Kadesh, in the south of Palestine, thus indicating the course taken by the storm. It sweeps the land from north to south. P.—Having spoken of God's power as exerted on the mountains, he now says the same thing of the desert ; and as the mountains which he specified were on the northern frontier, so the wilderness which he selects is that which bounded Palestine upon the south, the northern portion of the great Arabian desert, with which the Israelites had many strong associations, founded

partly in their personal experience, but still more in their national history. It is in this point of view that the wilderness of Kadesh is here added to Mount Lebanon.

9. As if to show that the Divine control extends to things both small and great, the Psalmist passes suddenly from lofty mountains and vast deserts to the weakest animals, in whom the terror of His presence hastens the throes of parturition. He then returns to more imposing natural phenomena, such as the stripping of the leaves and branches from whole forests by a mighty wind, which, no less than the thunder, is to be regarded as the voice of God. The temple or palace mentioned in the last clause is not the temple at Jerusalem, nor any earthly structure, but heaven, or the whole frame of nature, considered as God's royal residence. Throughout this palace, *all of it, i.e.,* all its parts, its contents, or its inhabitants—with special reference perhaps to the angelic hosts invoked in v. 1, who are then described as doing what he there invites them to do—not merely *speaks of His glory*, as the English version has it, but *says "Glory !"* as their constant and involuntary exclamation. A.—All the while, like a mighty diapason sounding on through the tumult, the voice of the sons of God in the heavenly temple is heard proclaiming "Glory !"

10, 11. The Psalm closes with lofty words of confidence, built on the story of the past, as well as on the contemplation of the present. "Jehovah sat throned for (*i.e.,* to send on earth) the flood" which once drowned the world of old. "Jehovah will sit throned a King forever." That ancient judgment spoke of His power over all the forces of nature in their most terrible form. So now and forever, all are His servants and effect His purposes. Then, as the tempest rolls away, spent and transient, the sunshine streams out anew from the softened blue over a freshened world, and every raindrop on the leaves twinkles into diamond light, and the end of the Psalm is like the after brightness ; and the tranquil low voice of its last words is like the songs of the birds again as the departing storm growls low and faint on the horizon. "The Lord will bless His people with peace." Thus, then, nature spoke to this devout heart. The silence was vocal ; the darkness, bright ; the tumult, order—and all was the revelation of a present God. A. M.

10. *Jehovah at the flood sat (enthroned), and Jehovah sits (as) King to eternity.* This verse must either be explained as introducing a new trait in the description of a tempest, that of a flood or inundation—or referred to the universal del-

uge, as the grandest instance of the natural changes which had been described. In favor of the latter explanation may be urged the intrinsic grandeur of the image which it calls up, its better agreement with the solemn declaration in the last clause, the peculiar fitness of a great historical example just in this place, and the invariable usage of the word to mean Noah's flood. The sense of the whole verse may be thus expressed in paraphrase. The God whose voice now produces these effects is the God who sat enthroned upon the deluge, and this same God is still reigning over nature and the elements, and will control them forever. A.

The ebbs and flowings of this lower world and the tosses and revolutions of the affairs in it, give not the least shake to the repose or to the counsels of the Eternal Mind. He sits as Judge in all the affairs of the children of men, perfectly secure of the full accomplishment of all His own purposes and designs, in spite of all opposition. The perfect repose of the Eternal Mind may be our comfort under all the disquietments of our mind. We are tossed on earth and in the sea, but He sits in the heavens, where He has prepared His throne for judgment. *He sits King forever*; no period can or shall be put to His government. The administration of His kingdom is consonant to His counsels from eternity, and pursuant to His designs for eternity. H.—Jesus has the government upon His shoulders eternally; our interests in the most stormy times are safe in His hands; therefore let us worship Him, and rejoice evermore. S.

11. This Great God whose majesty and glory stand forth revealed in such appalling forms throughout this Psalm is the Jehovah—the faithful God of His trustful people, in covenant relation with them as their God and Friend, Almighty to save and to bless them. What have they to fear with such a God their Friend and Saviour? Jonathan Edwards gives us this experience: “When my heart was far from God, every thunder-storm was a terror; but when I came near to Him in loving trust through Jesus Christ, I used to look out with inexpressible delight upon the black thunder-clouds, saying to myself, *That is my God!*” C.

Power was displayed in the hurricane whose course this Psalm so grandly pictures; and now, in the cool calm after the storm, that power is promised to be the strength of the chosen. He who wings the unerring bolt, who shakes the earth with His voice, will terrify the enemies of His saints, and give His children peace. Why are we weak when we have Di-

vine strength to flee to? Why are we troubled when the Lord's own peace is ours? Jesus the mighty God is our peace. S.—Our English word peace comes from the Latin *pax*. Pax itself is derived from a root *pag*, which means to fix. Thus peace is fixedness of mind, equilibrium of heart, the secret tranquillity of the soul at rest from disquieting cares, anxieties, and wants. *P. Norton.*

Happiness is the result of harmony between our wants as creatures and the world without; peace is the harmony between us as spiritual beings and the Father of our spirits. The one is as changeable as the objects or circumstances on which it relies; the other is as unchangeable as the God on whom it eternally rests. We may thus possess real happiness and real peace; yet either may exist without the other. Nay, more; happiness may be destroyed by God in order that the blessing of peace may be possessed; but never will He take away peace to give happiness. Happiness without peace is temporal, but peace along with happiness, that indeed is eternal. *N. McLeod.*

It is not so much in the enjoyment of outward prosperity, nor in the possession of earthly blessings, nor in the praise of men, whether of the Church or the world, that our true wealth, or strength, or honor can chiefly lie. Rather these are in a heart purified from sin, lifted above the world, calm and humble in fellowship with God in Christ, recognizing love in all the Divine dealings, and welcoming His will as ever wise, kind, and true. Happiness is often the result of mere characteristic buoyancy, of vigorous bodily health, of material prosperity, in company with the enthusiasm of youth or the ardent activities of manhood; and while the utter absence of any deeper and more elevated feelings tends to make this happiness brighter and heartier, it is nevertheless the happiness of only the surface of our nature, perfectly compatible with irreligion or viciousness, of selfishness or vanity, subject at any moment to be hopelessly and terribly interrupted, and with nothing to fall back upon but the misery of its recollections. Whereas peace is independent of the changes and chances of life, and can no more be disturbed by what men call misfortune in its lofty dominion over the inmost spirit, than the depths of the ocean can be stirred by the winter gales that beat its surface into foam. Not only is it the gift of God, but it is His very presence. Sickness cannot destroy it; poverty cannot rob it of its incorruptible riches; bereavement only makes it more real, and the approach of death more deep. The world which cannot give it,

cannot take it away ; its root is in the immovable assurance of the Divine acceptance and favor through the blood and righteousness of the Saviour. It gradually spreads its roots over the entire spiritual being through the sanctifying power of the eternal Spirit ; and while the only thing that can ruffle it is the silent reproach of a wounded conscience, the only thing in all the world to destroy it is sin. Thus, though we may not always be able to say we are happy, we may still have peace. *Bishop Thorold.*

He blesses His people with the full realization of His peace. How expressive in such a Psalm is this concluding word ! It overarches it like a rainbow. The beginning of the Psalm shows us the heavens open, and the throne of God in the midst of the angelic songs of praise, and the conclusion of it shows us, upon the earth and in the midst of Jehovah's voice of wrath as it shakes all things, His people victorious and blessed with peace. *Gloria in excelsis* is the beginning, and *pax in terris* the close.

After the flood, the heavens were spanned with a *rainbow*, and the promise of "*peace*" was made to mankind once more. After the storm, which this Psalm describes ; after the seven thunders, the blackened clouds, the flames of fire, the torn cedars of Lebanon, the devastated country, and the snapping of trees in the forests ; after the peril that man and beast alike had been in, and during the raging of the storm ; after all this, we see the "*bow in the cloud.*" For these two closing verses span the whole Psalm like a rainbow. They tell God's people that His eye is on them ; that He holds them, as well as the storm and the waters, in His hand, and they are safe. "*The Lord will give strength unto His people ; the Lord will bless His people with peace.*" He will give them *strength* in the hour of weakness and peril. "In the time of dearth, they shall have enough." He will be their arm every morning, and their *salvation* in every time of need. "*Strength*" most of all, when they need it most of all. They shall be in the "Ark" when His enemies are exposed to the storm outside. "*Strength*" according to their day. "As their day is their strength shall be"—"a very present help in time of trouble." It is not then without the deepest meaning that the Psalmist assures us that "The Lord will give *strength* unto His people."

But He will do more than this, because we want more. God promises more, and He will give more, "The Lord will bless His people

with *peace.*" That is the rainbow in the cloud spanning this stormy Psalm. It touches earth and heaven. "*Peace*" after a stormy voyage, after a stormy life, in the midst of peril, when conscience accuses of sin. "*Peace*" such as passes man's understanding, such as this world cannot give nor take away. "*Peace*" such as keeps the mind in an even and a heavenly frame, as a sentinel that guards a door, lest foes should get in and make havoc where God hath commanded peace. All this is in this promise, "The Lord will bless His people with peace." The Lord "*will*" do this. D.

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS (v. 2).

Holiness is beautiful in its own nature. Not more certainly do we look upon the rainbow, as its arch spans the heavens, or listen to the song which fills the grove with melody, with an *intuitive* perception of their beauty, than we intuitively discover an intrinsic beauty in holiness. It is in itself beautiful and lovely. It consists in conformity to the law of God. It is the love of God and man manifested and acted out in Christian graces and moral virtues. Toward God it is the love that is supreme, and that is expressed in delightful complacency in his whole character ; in gratitude for His goodness and mercy, and in adoring views of His greatness ; in ingenuous sorrow for having offended Him, in implicit submission to His will and authority ; in confidence in His truth, and a cheerful devotion to His service and glory. Toward man, it is the impartiality of a benevolent mind ; kind and unenvying ; bearing and forbearing ; gentle and unostentatious ; meek and forgiving ; unselfish and of seemly demeanor ; unsuspicious, and at war only with wickedness ; rejoicing in the truth and full of hope ; confiding, unwearied, and it "*never faileth.*" No right-minded man can look upon such an assemblage of excellence, without pleasing and gratified emotions.

The beauty of holiness is apparent also in its *benevolent tendencies*. We are no advocates for the theory that *utility* constitutes either the essence, the foundation, or the measure of moral virtue. Because a course of conduct *actually secures* the well-being of others, or our own, it does not follow, that, on this account, it is virtuous ; nor does it necessarily follow that it is virtuous, because this is its *tendency*. If there be no other criterion of moral rectitude than its benevolent effects, we see not how the inference can be repelled that there is no such thing as moral rectitude in the universe. If this be

true, happiness is the supreme good, and moral rectitude is but the means of securing it. That it is not true, is perfectly obvious from the single fact, that all men naturally love happiness, and as naturally hate moral rectitude. Moral rectitude is the supreme good ; it is the duty of men to pursue it as such ; while there is no such excellence in mere happiness, nor are men ever justified in making it the supreme object of their pursuit. Holiness *produces* happiness ; but it is as distinct from happiness as the cause is distinct from the effect. It is the *tendency* of holiness to produce happiness ; but this tendency does not constitute it holiness. So far from its essential excellence consisting in its conduciveness to good, this conduciveness arises from its essential excellence. "It must be obvious to every mind, that a principle may in its nature, when put into practical exercise, be fitted to produce happiness, while yet the production of happiness is not that which constitutes the rectitude of the principle." It is not holiness on account of its benevolent tendencies ; it has these benevolent tendencies because it is holiness. Though it is holiness, irrespective of the good it produces, the good it produces is but a manifestation of its excellence.

And in this we see one of the beauties of holiness. Like its Divine Author, it not only "is good, but *does* good ;" good is the native and appropriate result of it. The more accurately and extensively we mark the practical operation of it, the more do we perceive its wise and wholesome tendencies. Inspect its principles, analyze its emotions, trace out its influences ; and you will see that the uniform and invariable tendency of them is to produce a happy state of mind. While "the wicked travaileth with pain all his days," the "ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace ;" and while the former is "like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest," a "good man is satisfied from himself." Holiness, in all its forms, commends itself to man's spiritual nature ; it delights his intellect, interests his imagination, and satisfies his conscience ; while in all the active pursuit of it, he is employed in occupations that consult his true honor and dignity. If it ever produces grief, and throws a shade of pensiveness over the soul, it is only for its own imperfection and the abounding iniquity of a world that lieth in wickedness ; and even then it is a cherished sadness, and one by which the heart is made better. There is nothing in the most ardent and strongest holy emotions that produces satiety or weariness ; nor is the mind ever so exhausted or used up

by them as not to look forward to higher gratifications. The sources of enjoyment which it furnishes are never drained and never become impoverished. Its views are not unfrequently unutterably delightful views. Its powerful impressions of God's truth, its sense of the Divine presence, its habits of devotion and obedience, are joys such as a stranger meddleth not with. It has the advantage over every other source of enjoyment in the habits it forms, the sins it subdues, the exalted end it aims at, and the immortality it seeks after. There is nothing except holiness, of which it may be said that it is uniformly conducive to good. No pleasures of sin have this tendency, because they are followed, and often immingled with remorse ; because they are not lasting ; because they lose their relish by repetition, and destroy the relish for purer and higher joys. No exemption from care and toil has this tendency ; because man is formed for action, his nature requires thought and effort ; lassitude and inertness are the bane even of his hopes. Nor have wealth, and splendor, and earthly honors, and princely power this tendency ; rather do they create more desires than they gratify, jeopard more tranquillity than they secure, and not unfrequently leave their envied possessors themselves to envy the less agitated and more secure enjoyments of the more humble and unaspiring. The greatest and most permanent of all sinful pleasures are never attended with the light of His countenance, whose favor is life, and whose loving-kindness is better than life.

These benevolent tendencies of holiness form one of its high commendations. Wherever it goes it is on errands of love. It drops like the rain and distils like the dew. There is no mind it influences that does not gratefully acknowledge its influence. Whatever bosom it dwells in, and whatever portion of the world it visits, but for its conflict with evil, it makes that portion of the world and that bosom happy. Nay, its very conflict with wickedness is proof of its loveliness ; for it wars only with wickedness, wickedness which it would fain neutralize and eradicate ; and though the process may produce agitation and effervescence, they are from causes which only indicate its intrinsic excellence. Its object is to reform and renovate ; to illuminate and make happy ; to "pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." It is the great healer of the maladies that affect our race, gradually alleviating the curse upon man, and the curse upon the ground for man's sake. It is the fountain which sends forth streams of gladness, immingled with no

bitter ingredients ; like waters which issued from the sanctuary, "everything shall live whither the river cometh." And is there nothing beautiful in such benevolent tendencies ? Is not the light beautiful which chases the darkness from so many minds curtained with the shadow of death ? Is not the love beautiful which hears the sighing of the prisoner, and binds jarring humanity in one sweet brotherhood, so that they shall not hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain ? Is not the joy beautiful at which the mountains and the hills break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field clap their hands ? The charms of nature, and the mere imitative creations of art, are limited and inferior departments of beauty's empire. Purer loveliness and beauty far more attractive crown this work of God, compared with which the sweetest and most fragrant flower his hands have planted becomes shapeless and fades away. Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth ; while the beauty of holiness never withers, nor is its leaf less green in the year of drought, nor does it ever cease from yielding fruit.

The beauty of holiness is still more conspicuous in contrast with the deformity of sin. Truth never appears so true and pure as when seen in contrast with error ; nor is it ever so highly valued by its friends, as when, like the moon, walking in her brightness, it makes its path luminous amid a night of storms. So holiness never appears so beautiful and lovely as when contrasted with sin, and its varied colors are vividly painted upon the dark and retiring cloud of human wickedness. Look over the face of human society, and mark the career of the man, whose sin, shame, and misery multiply and augment the sin, shame, and misery of the world in which he dwells ; who is worse than useless because he is the enemy of God and man, and the instrument of perdition to others. And then mark the career of the man whose character is an ornament to his race, who lives to be useful, whose wisdom, virtue, and honor make the world in which he lives brighter, and better, and happier. In such a view, who has not new and more vivid impressions of the beauty of holiness ?

We may also inspect these opposites more closely and in some of their more distinctive attributes and characteristics. There is the malignity of sin ; and the benevolence of holiness. There is the irritation, the resentment, the fury of sin ; and the meekness, the forbearance, and the forgiving spirit of holiness. There is the fraud, the falsehood, the treachery of sin ; and

the honesty, the truth, the fidelity of holiness. There is the licentiousness, the debauch, the squalid wretchedness of sin ; and the circumspection, the honor, and the purity of holiness. There is the ignoble meanness and egotism of sin ; and the noble generosity and self-denial of holiness. There is the profanity of sin, setting its tongue against the heavens, and its mouth feeding on foolishness ; and, on the other hand, there is the respect for God, the reverence for God, the worship and honor of God, where holiness presents its incense and a pure offering. On the one hand, there is the folly of sin, turning the Sabbath into a day of care, toil, and dissipation, and making the lives of men bitter with hard bondage ; and, on the other, there is the weekly jubilee of holiness, enjoying its loved repose amid the quietness and devotions of God's day of rest. Here there is the unhalloved avarice of sin, with all its host of evils to individuals, to families, to the world ; there, there is the contentment of holiness, with all its innumerable train of blessings, chasing away from the hearts and habitations of men the thousand passions which agitate and torment. There is Nero singing on his lyre while Rome is wrapt in flames ; and there is Paul exclaiming : "I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." There are angelic smiles and demoniac frowns. There is a miniature hell and a miniature heaven. And in this contrast has not holiness a beauty ; and do we not contemplate it somewhat as angels contemplate it and with some measure of their joy ?

There is a last thought we may not suppress in these illustrations ; it relates to the beauty of holiness *in the perfection which it is destined to attain in its own native world*. If the beauty and glory of man's nature consists, not only in what it is, but in what it is capable of being, and will be, his capacity for holiness must be regarded as the crown of that beauty and glory. No created mind can gauge that capacity, nor measure its attainments in rectitude.

In the strange and barbarous mixture of sin with holiness, as it exists in this fallen world, beautiful as it is, its perfect beauty is never seen. There are rare examples in which its lustre shines forth ; but as exemplified in the great mass of good men, it has no such glory. Even in the best, its beauty is defaced, is marred with blemishes, and has alloy and wickedness. Abraham must equivocate ; Moses become impatient and angry ; David, impure and cruel ; and Peter must lie and swear. It is not to earth that we must look for holiness in its transparent loveliness. It has never been seen but one bright

and untarnished exemplification of what holiness is ; and so pure was it, and so reproachful to human wickedness, that men cried out, " Away with Him ! away with Him ! Crucify Him ! crucify Him ! " No ; the spoiler has entered here. With all the power of the Mighty Healer, the poison rankles in every human bosom. The freest mind bears the marks of its native servitude ; and though the chains are broken, they have left the deep furrows of their bondage.

Yet is there this precious truth in regard to the holiness of men on the earth. Not only is it, in so far forth as it is holiness, beautiful, and like the holiness of angels, and like its Divine Author ; but its character is progressive, and its course is onward and upward to perfected excellence. From its first act of prostration before the mercy-seat, where it lifts its hands and heart to God ; where it pours into His ear its voice of alternate penitence and praise, and where, in full view of the blood of the covenant, its faith takes hold of His righteousness and His promise ; it rises, though it may be in unequal progress, higher and still more high, till at last its anticipations are realized in views that are to be never obscured, in affections of unmingled purity, and in the fulness of joy. Wondrous words are those uttered by the apostle when he says : " Beloved, now are we the sons of God ; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be ; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be *like Him*, for we shall see Him as He is."

But how can man illustrate or impress this beautiful thought ? If it requires holiness to discover the beauty of holiness, it is no marvel that it is not for lips of clay to speak of its perfected beauty. Reason and judgment have here no labored work to perform ; for God hath revealed it all by His Spirit. Imagination here wings its way in silence, and its pinions droop. The impoverished heart, and even its sweetest, richest experiences, scarcely tread the hither verge of those fields of light. It is arrested, and moved to tears, and it may be to precious hopes ; and when it grasps the mighty reality,

it is by a vigorous faith. Oh ! how sin and the world separate the heart from God and heaven. Yet is the assurance a delightful one, that it will not always be thus ; and that the little holiness that exists in the present world is an earnest of the holiness that will be. Beautiful for contemplation is it, even imbedded as it is with the gross materials of earth ; nay, the lowest and most imperfect degree of it possesses excellency with which no other created thing can be compared. And how beautiful when detached from the mire and rubbish of earth, and severed from all this sublunary alloy, it shines and sparkles in its own native firmament ! " Behold," says Bildad to Job, " behold even to the moon and it shineth not ; and the stars are not pure in His sight ; how much less is man that is a worm, and the son of man that is a worm !" Yet glorious, beyond thought, is the destiny of this abject worm. We look upon it, and then look up to the moon and stars. Resplendent as they are, man that is a worm will be more resplendent. Those lights of heaven are not pure in His sight ; but man will be more pure. Brilliant as is yonder firmament, and decked with beauty as it is, scenes of brilliancy there are far surpassing these. Matter is a perishing thing. It is the mind that lives. Stars, and suns, and systems shall be rolled together as a scroll, and pass away. It is holiness that lives, gilding heaven with its beauty. Denude that pure world of its purity, and it is no longer heaven. There is nothing for which it is to be so much desired, nothing for which its glorious Architect so much values it, as its holiness. Its wall is holiness, its gates of pearl and its streets of gold are holiness. Its city is holiness, " as it were transparent glass." There " shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth." It has adornments from earth ; but they consist of " the nations of the saved" which walk in the light of it, and of " the glory and honor of the nations" which they bring into it. " It has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it ; for the Lord doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." *H. B. Smith.*

PSALM XXX.

A PSALM ; A SONG AT THE DEDICATION OF THE HOUSE ; A PSALM OF DAVID.

- 1 I WILL extol thee, O LORD ; for thou hast raised me up,
And hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.
- 2 O LORD my God,
I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.
- 3 O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from Sheol :
Thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.
- 4 Sing praise unto the LORD, O ye saints of his,
And give thanks to his holy name.
- 5 For his anger is but for a moment ;
In his favour is life :
Weeping may tarry for the night [*or, come in to lodge at even*],
But joy *cometh* in the morning.
- 6 As for me, I said in my prosperity,
I shall never be moved.

- 7 Thou, LORD, of thy favour hadst made my mountain to stand strong :
Thou didst hide thy face ; I was troubled.
- 8 I cried to thee, O LORD ;
And unto the LORD I made supplication :
- 9 What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit ?
Shall the dust praise thee ? shall it declare thy truth ?
- 10 Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me :
LORD, be thou my helper.
- 11 Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing ;
Thou hast loosed my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness :
- 12 To the end that *my* glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent.
O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.

THIS Psalm was composed after recovery from a sickness which had very nearly proved fatal. The singer begins with an ascription of praise to God for His great goodness, and calls upon all who, like himself, had known the lovingkindness of Jehovah, to join him in his thanksgiving. Thence he passes (v. 6) to a recital of his own experience, his pleading with God in his affliction, and God's answer to his prayer. P.

The historical occasion of the Psalm is furnished by the narrative in 2 Sam. 24 and 1 Chr. 21. David's presumption in numbering the people had been punished by a pestilence, which raged until the destroying angel had, in answer to the king's prayer, been required to sheathe his sword. The spot where this indication of God's mercy had been given was immediately purchased by David, and consecrated by the erection of an altar, upon which he offered sacrifices, and received the Divine approbation in the gift of fire from heaven. This place the king expressly calls the house of God (1 Chr. 22 : 1), as the designated site of the temple, for which he immediately commenced his preparations, and in reference to which this Psalm might well be called a *song of dedication*, although naturally more full of the pestilence and the sin which caused it, than of the sanctuary yet to be erected. A.—That spot of hallowed

associations David bought, and then built there an altar, offered sacrifices which the Lord signally answered by fire from heaven ; whereupon David accepted these facts as God's own consecration of this spot to be the site of the future temple—in a sort, a dedication of its corner-stone—and forthwith proceeded to make preparation for the temple on this very ground. "Then David said, This is the house of the Lord God, and this is the altar of the burnt-offering for Israel" (1 Chr. 22 : 1).

2, 3. It is at least supposable that the pestilence before which seventy thousand fell touched David's person, though not fatally. Upon his humble cry to God, healing mercy came and brought him up from the jaws of death. His words mean precisely, Thou hast spared me alive *from* those (or *out of* those) who were going down by thousands to the grave. These words become specially pertinent under the supposition that he was attacked by the great plague, but restored in answer to his prayer. C.

3. *Sheol, going down into the pit, i.e., dying. Made me alive from them, i.e., separated me from them by restoring or preserving my life, so that I no longer can be numbered with them.* A.

4. Singing God's praise is a work of the most meditation of any we perform in public. It keeps the heart longest upon the thing spoken.

Prayer and hearing pass quick from one sentence to another; this sticks long upon it. Meditation must follow after hearing the Word, and praying with the minister—for new sentences, still succeeding, give not liberty in the instant well to muse and consider upon what is spoken; but in this you pray and meditate. How fairly may the heart spread itself in meditation on the thing while singing it over! Our singing is measured in deliberate time not more for music than meditation. He that seeks not finds not this advantage in singing Psalms, hath not yet learned what it means. *John Lightfoot.*

His holy name; lit. “His holy memorial,” with reference, no doubt, to the passage (Ex. 3: 15), “This is My name forever, and this is My *memorial* to all generations.” God’s name is His revelation of Himself, in all His various attributes of love, wisdom, power, holiness, truth, righteousness. God’s memorial is that great history of redemption which was, so to speak, the setting up of a monument to His glory, on which all these attributes were inscribed. P.—The American Committee have brought out the idea precisely in translating: “Give thanks to His holy memorial name.” E. C. B.

5. The things of this Psalm are of continual interest. They do not belong to any one time or any one type of experience. Some of the notes in it are suitable to home and family and individuals through all the years of their history. Eminently so is this fifth verse, which tells us of the bitter and the sweet, the dark and the light, which run, in various distribution, along human lives. The underlying doctrine is the great doctrine or fact that “God is love,” that love runs through all, rules over all, explains all. *Raleigh.*

A reason why God’s saints should praise Him—because He manifests Himself to them in love, not in wrath; or if in wrath, but for a moment. Love rules over all. The literal rendering of the verse is: “For in His anger is (but) a moment, in His favor a life; in the evening, weeping may come in to pass the night; but with the morning (there is) a shout of joy.” The parallelism is carefully preserved in each member—“anger . . . favor;” “a moment . . . a life;” “evening . . . morning;” “weeping . . . joy.” Weeping is described under the image of a wayfarer who comes in at evening to lodge for the night. The suddenness and surprise of gladness, on the other hand, in the morning, are beautifully represented by the simple “at dawn, a shout of joy,” without a verb. Just as the sun in Eastern lands, with-

out any long prelude of twilight to announce his coming, leaps, as it were, in a moment above the horizon, so does the light of God’s love dispel in a moment the long night and darkness of sorrow. See the beautiful parallel, Isa. 54: 7, 8. P.

So brief and transient are the moments of God’s displeasure; so soon His anger passes away and His favor brings life out of threatened death. One night of tears; but with the morning, songs of joyful deliverance! Such for the most part is human life. Health the rule; sickness the exception; comfort fills out the years; pain and anguish are shut into the moments: weeping sometimes all the night, and then relief and joy for the days and years that follow. C.

To man pain is the exception and pleasure is the rule. His memories of pain, it is true, are ever more vivid than those of pleasure, and far more disposed is he to talk of his trials than his blessings; but is not the very rarity of his sufferings as compared with his enjoyments the cause of this? The uncommon ever makes a deeper impression than the general—the incidental exception than the general rule. The whole suffering of humanity here is but as one stormy night in the voyage of its earthly history; it is but a cloudy moment in a bright day of life. Evil is but a passing note or two at most in creation’s long and joyous anthem. *Homily.*—In the deepest night of sorrow God gives us so much to be thankful for that we need never cease our singing. With all our wisdom and foresight, we can take a lesson in gladness and gratitude from the happy bird that sings all night as if the day were not long enough to tell its joy. *Coleridge.*

The believer’s mourning shall last but till morning. God will turn his winter’s night into a summer’s day; his sighing into singing, his grief into gladness, his mourning into music. The life of a Christian is filled up with interchanges of sickness and health, weakness and strength, crosses and comforts, miseries and mercies, joys and sorrows, mirth and mourning; all honey would harm us, all wormwood would undo us; a composition of both is the best way in the world to keep our souls in a healthy constitution. It is best and most for the health of the soul that the south wind of mercy and the north wind of adversity do both blow upon it; and though every wind that blows shall blow good to the saints, yet certainly their sins die most and their graces thrive best when they are under the drying, nipping north wind of calamity, as well as under the

warm, cherishing south wind of mercy and prosperity. *T. Brooks.*

In spite of all that life can bring to shake our calmness of enduring faith, we have something within us (if we be Christians indeed) which the world cannot reach. Joys—secret but pervading joys—are treasured in the believer's heart, though oftentimes he cannot himself measure the degree, or trace the source, of his own emotions! And in this gloomy night of life—waiting for the everlasting day, we must have patience, even though we cannot yet catch the dawnings of the morn—though we must live by sober faith, and be, for a while, the calm expectants of glory. *W. A. B.*

It is true of every individual Christian that to him the morning cometh. Long he may watch; and “hope deferred may make the heart sick;” and his faith may be ready to faint, but still it is true that to him brighter times will come, and on him the day-star of hope and salvation will arise. Or even should his trials continue till life shall close, and should night follow night full of gloom, still he sees a light above in heaven. Beyond the confines of all this darkness his eye beholds the beams of eternal day; a world where the sun never sets, and where light dwells forever around the throne of God. *Barnes.*—It is but a very short time between grace and glory, between our title to the crown and our wearing the crown, between our right to the heavenly inheritance and our possession of it. The short storm will end in an everlasting calm. “*Sorrow may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.*” *T. Brooks.*

6. In my prosperity. Prosperity is more pleasant than profitable to us. Though it show it look like a fair summer, yet it is indeed a wasting winter, and spendeth all the fruit we have reaped in the harvest of sanctified affliction. We are never in greater danger than in the sunshine of prosperity. To be always indulged of God and never to taste of trouble, is rather a token of God's neglect than of His tender love. *Struther.*—It is more common to pray for strength to endure through times of adversity and suffering than for strength to endure through times of prosperity and gladness. Yet it is these latter times of buoyant self-reliance that are most full of peril. It is not in those perilous ways when every step gives fresh evidence that without our Leader we are lost, that we are most likely to turn away from Him. That supreme peril comes rather when we walk in the open plain, and have forgotten the serpents that lurk among the flowers. For every

soul that is harmed by adversity, ten are harmed by prosperity. Yet you will find a hundred persons who pray against that adversity which so often brings men closer to God, where you will find one who prays against that pleasant prosperity which too often allures men away from God and from their own best future. *H. C. T.*

I shall never be moved. We are very apt to dream, when things are well with us, that they will always be so, and never otherwise. *To-morrow shall be as this day.* As if we should think, when the weather is once fair, that it will be ever fair; whereas nothing is more certain than that it will change. *H.*—It is rare to receive much of this world, and not as the prodigal to go afar off; 'tis hard to keep close to God in prosperity, when we have much of this world to live upon and content ourselves with; to live upon God and make Him our content and stay, as if we had no other life nor livelihood but in Him; we are very apt in such a case to let go our hold of God, discustom ourselves to the exercise of faith, abate and estrange our affections from God. *E. Pledger.*

6, 7. In their times of trial God's people in all ages have been brought to feel their entire dependence on Him. In days of flowing prosperity we have little sense of that dependence. As the Psalmist puts it here: “In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.” When all goes well with us, we expect the same prosperity to continue; it seems stereotyped, the fixed and permanent condition of things. When the days run smoothly, “involving happy months, and these as happy years,” all seems certain to continue. But a change comes over our life. Ill-health fastens on us; death invades our circle; relatives bring us into deep waters; our means of living fail; we are plunged into a very wilderness of woe. How falsely we judged when we thought that it was by its own inherent stability our mountain stood strong! No; it was solely the result of God's favor, for all our springs are in Him; the moment He hides His face we are most grievously troubled. Sad but salutary experience! *W. G. B.*

All the world does no good without the favor of God. As all the stars though they shine together, do not dispel the darkness of night; so no creatures can comfort us sufficiently when God hides His face. “Thou didst hide Thy face and I was troubled.” *Manton.*—What soul can be deserted and not be afflicted? Certainly His absence cannot but be lamented with greatest grief, whose presence the soul prizeth

above all earthly joy ; when the light of God's countenance is obscured and the comforts of the Spirit detained, then the heavens appear not so clear, the promises taste not so sweet, doubts arise, fears overflow, troubles enlarge, and the soul becomes afflicted with all variety of disquietments. *Mossom.*

8, 9. His plea with God is, What would my life-blood avail if Thou shouldest send me to the grave? Does the decomposed dust of the dead in their graves render praise to God? Does it bear witness before living men to Thy truth? *i.e.*, If I may live I shall praise God and witness to His truth before the living, and this will avail to the glory and honor of God. But, cut down in death, my lips are dumb thenceforth as to any testimony for God in the land of the living. Essentially the same reasoning appears in Psalm 6 : 5 and 88 : 10-12 and Isa. 38 : 18, 19. C.—His prayer for prolonged life was not offered therefore with the view of any earthly possession or enjoyment, but only with a view to the honor of God. He dreaded death as being an end of praise to God. For no Psalms are sung beyond the grave. D.—God would be no gainer by his death. *What profit is there in my blood*, implied that he would willingly die if he could thereby do any real service to God or his country. Nay, in his honor God would seem to be a loser by his death. *Shall the dust praise?* The services of God's house cannot be performed by the dust ; it cannot praise Him ; there is none of that device or working in the grave, for it is the land of silence. The promises of God's covenant cannot be performed to the dust. The best pleas in prayer are those that are taken from God's honor ; and then we ask a right for life when we have in view that we may live and praise Him. H.

Every better spirit, just in proportion to its thoughtfulness and nobility, is saddened as it compares performance with aspiration and work with aim. There are times when the words of God's most believing children about this fleeting life, and the shortness of our time for doing God's appointed work, run in the mould of the Psalmists. There was a point of view from which life presented itself to our Lord Himself as a golden day, and death as a cheerless night. "I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day ; the *night cometh when no man can work.*" *Bishop Alexander.*

10. Lord, be Thou my helper. In every duty ; in every conflict ; in every trial ; in every effort to promote the Lord's cause ; in every season of prosperity ; in every hour

we live, this short prayer is suitable. If the Lord help us, there is no duty which we cannot perform ; there is no foe which we cannot overcome ; there is no difficulty which we cannot surmount. *James Smith.*

11, 12. The words describe certain changes in the lives and experience of godly men. Sackcloth was the attire of the leper, the ascetic, the penitent, and the mourner, sometimes, too, of the prophets of God. Sackcloth represents a condition of affliction. Beautiful raiment was worn on festive and joyous occasions. Here the joy which the wearing of such attire would betoken is used to represent the raiment itself, and the raiment is employed to represent prosperity. There is in human life and experience the turning of mourning into dancing, the putting off of sackcloth and girding with gladness. They whose life has been redeemed from destruction will understand this. The words point to God as the Author of these changes, and affirm that praise is the end and object of these changes. Praise is higher than prayer. It is divine. There is nothing in the Divine consciousness which corresponds to our prayers ; but in God's self-appreciation there is that which is in harmony with our praises. While God's creatures praise Him, they are unfallen ; and in the degree that the spirit of praise is restored in them their redemption is being wrought out. *S. Martin.*—To bless God for mercies is the way to increase them ; to bless Him for miseries is the way to remove them. No good lives so long as that which is thankfully improved ; and no evil dies so soon as that which is patiently endured. *Dyer.*

Penitence must rise up into joy. In its very nature penitence is a passing, transitory stage, and not an abiding state. If it were the latter, it would prove that it was not true penitence, but some strange counterfeit. Penitence is like the dawn that passes into the full daylight. But what is to turn penitence into joy, confession into praise? Surely, belief in pardon. Ah ! we want more faith to lift us up. We want more simple acceptance of God's promises. We want more child-like restfulness in His fatherly love. Yes ; it is true, belief in pardon is the secret charm which can turn penitence into joy. Blessed are they who, having confessed their sins, and believed in God's pardoning grace, can say, "Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing ; Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness." *W. W. How.*

12. *To the end that my glory may sing praise unto Thee*, says David. Whether his tongue

or his soul, or both. What he calls *his glory* he shows us; and what use he hath for it—namely, to give the Lord glory, to sing His praises; then it was truly David's glory when it was so employed, in giving glory to Him whose peculiar due glory is. What have we to do in the world as once and again His creatures, anew *created unto good works*, but to exercise ourselves in those, and by those to advance His glory? that all may return to Him from whom

all is, as the rivers run back to the sea from whence they came. *Of Him and through Him, and therefore for Him are all things.* Leighton.

The designed result of so speedy and thorough a change in his affliction, after it had wholesomely humbled him, was Jehovah's praise. And the praise of Jehovah forever is also his determination, as this Psalm vows, and at the same time carries it out. D.

PSALM XXXI.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN. A PSALM OF DAVID.

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|---|---|
| <p>1 IN thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed:
Deliver me in thy righteousness.</p> <p>2 Bow down thine ear unto me; deliver me speedily:
Be thou to me a strong rock, an house of defence to save me.</p> <p>3 For thou art my rock and my fortress;
Therefore for thy name's sake lead me and guide me.</p> <p>4 Pluck me out of the net that they have laid privily for me;
For thou art my strong hold.</p> <p>5 Into thine hand I commend my spirit:
Thou hast redeemed me, O LORD, thou God of truth.</p> <p>6 I hate them that regard lying vanities:
But I trust in the LORD.</p> <p>7 I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy:
For thou hast seen my affliction;
Thou hast known my soul in adversities.</p> <p>8 And thou hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy;
Thou hast set my feet in a large place.</p> <p>9 Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in distress:
Mine eye wasteth away with grief, yea, my soul and my body.</p> <p>10 For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing:
My strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are wasted away.</p> <p>11 Because of all mine adversaries I am become a reproach,
Yea, unto my neighbours exceedingly, and a fear to mine acquaintance:
They that did see me without fled from me.</p> | <p>12 I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind:
I am like a broken vessel.</p> <p>13 For I have heard the defaming of many,
Terror on every side:
While they took counsel together against me,
They devised to take away my life.</p> <p>14 But I trusted in thee, O LORD:
I said, Thou art my God.</p> <p>15 My times are in thy hand:
Deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.</p> <p>16 Make thy face to shine upon thy servant:
Save me in thy lovingkindness.</p> <p>17 Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon thee:
Let the wicked be ashamed, let them be silent in Sheol.</p> <p>18 Let the lying lips be dumb;
Which speak against the righteous insolently,
With pride and contempt.</p> <p>19 Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee,
Which thou hast wrought for them that put their trust in thee, before the sons of men!</p> <p>20 In the covert of thy presence shalt thou hide them from the plottings of man:
Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.</p> <p>21 Blessed be the LORD:
For he hath shewed me his marvellous lovingkindness in a strong city.</p> <p>22 As for me, I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes:
Nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee.</p> |
|---|---|

23 O love the LORD, all ye his saints :
The LORD preserveth the faithful,
And plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.

24 Be strong, and let your heart take courage,
All ye that hope in the LORD.

A PSALM in which earnest prayer for deliverance from trouble is kindled and animated throughout by a lively trust and hope in God. It consists of three principal divisions : The singer prays God to be gracious to him in his trouble, expressing at the same time his trust in Him, who in times past had been his deliverer (vs. 1-8). He pours out before God the story of his sufferings and his sorrows, beseeching Him again to lift upon him the light of His countenance, and to put his enemies to shame (vs. 9-18). He concludes with praise and thanksgiving to God for His goodness to all who trust in Him, and particularly to himself ; and calls upon all the righteous to love the Lord (vs. 19-24). P.

1-8. He begins with a prayer for deliverance which is grounded on the confidence which Jehovah, to whom he commits himself, never can disappoint ; and rejoices beforehand in the security he anticipates without a doubt. From the fact of his being hidden in God springs the confident certainty, that neither now nor ever can it come to pass with him that he will be ashamed or that his hope will disappoint him. D.—Faith and prayer must go together. He that believes, let him pray ; *I believe, therefore have I spoken* ; and he that prays, let him believe, for the prayer of faith is the prevailing prayer. We have both here. H.

1. David, the record says (1 Sam. 30), “ encouraged himself in the Lord his God.” “ The Lord *his God*” gives us the key-note of his life. It was forever settled in his soul that Jehovah was his own God. He held this conviction in the spirit of a consciously full consecration to His honor and service, and of a strong, unshaken trust in His care and protection. With such a mutual understanding between God and himself, he might fitly say : “ Let me never be put to shame.” “ Deliver me in Thy righteousness” rests its plea not on the ground of David’s absolute sinlessness (see v. 10), but of God’s fidelity to His promise and to His covenant obligations. C.—For the support of faith, mark well whereon it may safely rest ; even upon God’s *righteousness*, as well as upon His mercy. On this ground did the apostle in faith expect the crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4 : 7, 8), because the Lord from whom he expected it is a righteous judge ; and the Psalmist is bold to appeal to the righteousness of God. We may be well assured that what God’s goodness,

grace, and mercy moved Him to promise, His truth, His faithfulness, and righteousness will move Him to perform. W. Gouge.

2. A rock. The general idea of this symbol is firmness, solidity. God is a rock for a foundation, for a fortress, for shade and refreshment. None that ever built on that Rock have been confounded. A. M.

3. What he asks in the preceding verse he here asserts, that God is his protector, and must therefore of necessity protect him, not only for the sufferer’s sake, but for the honor of His own name or manifested nature. A.—God’s name was committed to his protection by the fact that David had accepted His promises, had given himself to His service on the guaranty of the requisite protection, and therefore was entitled to feel that Jehovah’s name was pledged for his deliverance. C.

For Thy name’s sake. If merely a creature’s honor or the glory of angels were involved, man’s salvation would indeed be uncertain. But every step involves the honor of God. We plead for *His name’s sake*. If God should begin and not continue, or if He should carry on but not complete the work, all would admit that it was for some reason that must bring reproach on the Almighty. This can never be. God was self-moved to undertake man’s salvation. His glorious name makes it certain the top-stone shall be laid in glory. Plumer.

5. Into the hand of this God, who is and who will be all this to him, he commits his spirit ; he hands it over into His hand as a trust, or deposit, for what is deposited there is safely laid up and removed from all danger and all need. D.—These words are appropriate to any dying saint, and were used by Jesus dying, and by the martyred Stephen ; yet we need not assume that in using them David thought of himself as dying, but rather as fully committing the whole question of life and death into the hands of his God, in the assurance that God both had redeemed him from death in other perils and would again. In offering his prayer thus, “ Lord God of truth,” he indicated the hold he consciously had upon God’s promise and veracity for his deliverance. C.

Upon the expression of confidence in the power and faithfulness of God, follows the expression of the singer’s resolve. *My spirit (ruach)*, more than my *soul* or *life (nephes)*.

It is not only from sickness and death, but from sin and all enemies that the man of God would be kept, and therefore he commends to God, not his body or his bodily life alone, but the life of his spirit, which is more precious. "Thou *hast been*, and Thou *art*, my Redeemer;" and further, there is implied, "because Thou changest not, I confidently anticipate redemption from this present calamity." The past continuing up to the present moment (strict perfect) is in the singer's mind a pledge of the future, especially because God is the God of truth, as opposed to the lying vanities (in the next verse), *i.e.*, all false objects of trust, here perhaps especially *false gods*. P.—That which encourages us to commit our spirits into the hand of God is, that He has not only created but redeemed them; the particular redemptions of the Old Testament Church and the Old Testament saints were typical of our redemption by Jesus Christ. H.

In the hour of death the palpitating heart must appropriate the *personal affection* of the Redeemer to His people. *This appropriation* is the secret of dying. Christianity meets us where we most of all need its aid; and meets us too with the very aid we need. It does not tell us of the splendors of the invisible world; but it does far better when, in three words, it informs us that to loosen from the shore of mortality is *to be with Christ*. This is precisely the assurance which the occasion demands; for it not only quickens the devout affections, but it fixes them on their object. All security and all joy are comprised in the idea of beholding and of approaching the Son of God—the Son of man—now exercising universal dominion; and especially ruling the world of spirits. "If I go, I will come again to receive you to Myself." I. T.

As we think of Psalms in connection with the blessed hope of eternal life, we associate with them calm sweet faces, from which, when our eyes see them next, the lines of pain and sorrow shall be smoothed out, and they shall look fairer and nobler than they ever did. From the cross, the stake, the fagot, the sick-room, fragments of Psalms break upon our ears, set to the music of Easter. This verse rises from saint after saint; it came from Stephen, Polycarp, Basil, Epiphanius of Pavia, Bernard, Huss, Luther, Melancthon. *Bishop Alexander*.

7. Sure of being heard, he resolves to give expression to his grateful joy for Jehovah's grace, because He has looked upon his sorrow, because He has known and exerted Himself for

his soul's needs. D.—In the midst of trouble faith will furnish matter of joy and promise to itself gladness, especially from the memory of by-past experiences of God's mercy. The ground of our gladness, when we have found a proof of God's kindness to us, should not be in the benefit so much as in the fountain of the benefit; for this giveth us hope to drink again of the like experience from the fountain which did send forth that benefit. Therefore David says, "*I will be glad and rejoice in Thy mercy.*" *Dickson*.—For mercy past he is grateful, and for mercy future, which he believingly anticipates, he is joyful. In our most importunate intercessions we must find breathing time to bless the Lord; praise is never a hindrance to prayer, but a refreshment therein. Those two words, *glad* and *rejoice*, are an instructive reduplication, we need not stint ourselves in our holy triumph.

"*For Thou hast considered my trouble.*" Thou hast seen it, weighed it, directed it, fixed a bound to it, and in all ways made it a matter of tender consideration. A man's consideration means the full exercise of his mind; what must God's consideration be! S.—All pain, sickness, weariness, distress, languor, agony of mind or body, whether in ourselves or others, is to be treated reverently, seeing in it our Maker's hand passing over us; fashioning, by suffering, the imperfect or decayed substance of our souls. Every sorrow is a billow on this world's troublesome sea, which we must pass over on the cross, to bear us nearer to our home. Each trouble is meant to relax the world's hold over us, and our hold upon the world, each loss to make us seek our gain in heaven. *Pusey*.—Nothing is intolerable that is necessary. God hath bound thy trouble upon thee by His Providence, with a design to try thee and with purposes to reward and to crown thee. These cords thou canst not break, and therefore lie thou down gently, and suffer the hand of God to do what He please. *Jeremy Taylor*.

8. Set my feet in a large place. It is not every sort of comforting a mourner will call "blessed." If you cannot let me in through this gateway of distress to a peace, a largeness of delight unfelt before; if you do not turn my very tears to showers of sunshine, and lift me from my valley up to heights of glorious bliss on which I could not otherwise have stood; where, I pray you, is the "blessedness" of my "mourning"? *Dykes*.—Many a man's experience will bear out the seeming paradox that the joys of the spirit which clings with an unwavering confidence to the promises of God are

greatest in the hours of the greatest trial, because faith then is strongest in its exercise. It is in moral as in natural things; music sounds softer and sweeter by night than by day, because then all is still, and the notes are brought out more fully. It is in the hour of calamity that the ruptured heart-strings yield the sweetest melody, when touched by God, and the notes of praise are loudest and richest, because the promises of truth which alone can raise them then seem most precious. *E. Mason.*

Oh, holy path of God! when it leads us through many sorrows, apparently downward, but in reality upward. The narrower and more thorny the path, the more splendid the goal to which it leads. The more that this world owes us in friends and the fulfilling of our wishes, so much richer and more comforting is the adjustment in the other world. Well for us that we, as Christians, have a so much clearer insight into eternity and the mystery of its retribution, that we, in faith in the Sufferer of all sufferers, can utter the words, "Through cross to crown," and find comfort in them, even here, for all the sufferings of this life. *Christlieb.*

9-13. After the pæan sung in the fulness of faith before the victory, prayer begins again in this second portion of the Psalm; this prayer is grounded on the greatness of his suffering, which the Psalmist, after strengthening himself in his confidence on God, now sets before Him all the more comprehensively. *D.*

9, 10. Recurring again to his bitter trials, he represents them as a long and terrible affliction—as wasting his life-power, impairing his health, poisoning the fountains of his peace and comfort, and all the more so because blended with a sense of sin, which is but too often one of the most bitter ingredients in the cup of trial on earth. *C.*—**Because of mine iniquity.** See how the eye is turned within, as well as without, upon his enemies. Suffering does its work when it leads us to commune with our own hearts, and to discover the evils which are hidden there. *P.*

11-13. Not for any fault of his own David became an outcast and exile from many of his former friends and neighbors. Few had the courage or the sympathy with him to be willing to appear as his friend. Hence his circumstances made him, in these respects, a sort of type of his greater Son, who, not at all for His own fault, was "despised and rejected of men." *C.*

12. The expression seems to correspond exactly to the second member of the English proverb, *out of sight, out of mind.* The com-

parison with an earthen vessel, at best of little value, easily broken, and when broken worthless, only fit to be contemptuously thrown aside, is a favorite with Jeremiah, who appears to have derived it, with some other favorite ideas and expressions, from the Psalm before us. *A.*

14-18. But although a curse of the world and the offscouring of all people, he trusts in God, his deliverer and avenger. It seemed as though Jehovah had given him up in anger, but he trusts in Him, and in spite of this appearance he prays to Him with the words of appropriating faith. *D.*

14. *And I on Thee did trust, Jehovah; I said, My God (art) Thou!* "Amid these distresses, and in spite of them, I still confided in Jehovah, and expressed my confidence by solemnly avouching Him to be my God, and therefore bound by covenant to save me, as I am no less bound by covenant to trust Him." It is worthy of remark how constantly the ancient saints make trust in God essential to all spiritual safety. *A.*

Thou art my God. The assurance of faith rests as on a rock upon the Person and Word of God. Christ has died for me and risen again. He invites me to come to Him, to rest on Him, to believe His love, to accept His salvation, to receive His grace, to bear His yoke. I will believe His love, on the authority of His Word, far above what I can either ask or think. I accept the salvation which the voice of His quickening Spirit has made a supreme necessity to my conscience, and, by methods chosen by Himself, has brought home to my heart. *Bishop Thorold.*

15. *In Thy hand (are) my times; set me free from the hand of my foes and from my persecutors.* By *times* we are to understand the current of events or the vicissitudes of life, as when we speak familiarly of good times or hard times. There may be also an allusion to the turning points or critical junctures of his history. The first clause presents the ground or reason of the second. "Since the events of my life are at Thy disposal, set me free," etc. Freeing from the hand is the opposite of shutting up in it. *Foes* and *persecutors* are not distinct classes, but different descriptions of the same. *A.*

My times; *i.e.*, all my life with its "sundry and manifold changes," its joys and sorrows, its hopes and conflicts, are not the sport of chance, or the creatures of a blind fate, but are in Thy hand, O Thou living, personal Redeemer. On this confidence are grounded the petitions which follow, and the hopes expressed. *P.*—If God have our times in His hand He

can help us ; and if He be our God He *will* help us ; and then what can discourage us ? It is a great support to those who have God for their God, that their times are in His hand ; and He will be sure to order and dispose of them for the best to all those who commit their spirits into His hand, to suit them to their times. The time of life is in God's hands, to lengthen or shorten, embitter or sweeten as He pleases. Our times, all events that concern us and the timing of them, these are at God's disposal ; they are not in our own hands, for the way of man is not in himself, not in our friends' hands, nor in our enemies' hands, but in God's ; *every man's judgment proceedeth from Him*. David does not in his prayers prescribe to God, but subscribe to Him : " Lord, my times are in Thy hand, and I am well pleased that they are so, they could not be in a better hand ; Thy will be done." H.

We are not waifs and strays upon the ocean of fate, but are steered by infinite wisdom toward our desired haven. Providence is a pillow for anxious heads, an anodyne for eare, a grave for despair. S.—God has chosen for us the period of the world in which we should live. Feeling that God has placed us in this age, that we may make our impress on it, we should prepare ourselves faithfully for doing its work. Our circumstances and the direction of our lives upon earth are in God's hand. We are standing while the generations that rose up by our side are sleeping in the ground. We live because it is God's good pleasure that we should still have a work to do and responsibilities to meet. If God thus encircles us by the agencies of His providential power and grace, then we ought to feel our dependence on God, not on man, not on the best-laid plans. This sense of dependence should keep us in the attitude of prayer. Only by realizing this great truth do we prepare ourselves either for great happiness or great usefulness. The God in whose hands our times are holds the times of all other human beings, holds all agencies, directs all events according to the counsel of His will, and we shall be successful only when we place ourselves directly in harmony with His laws. What a source of comfort it is when we can believe fully that our times are in God's hand ! If we feel we are resting upon the bosom of Omnipotence, what can disturb our repose ? M. Simpson.

Happy the man who endures patiently ; who in spite of all, hoping against hope, out of the depth of his soul can say : " *I trusted in Thee, O Lord ; I said, Thou art my God, my times are*

in Thy hand !" The one is not found without the other ; first, the *my* of faith, and then the *Thy* of perfect, childlike submission. Such a submissive, trusting soul may say : My lot in life is determined, my course in life is guided, the period of my life is fixed by God's hand. And above all, the *goal* of my life is *guaranteed* by God. The hand which points the way, and thus far has led the pilgrim forward, never let slip one whom He has grasped. " My times" become at last eternities ; and the hand that sustained the first has in due season also the last to bestow. Thence the same lips which uttered these avowals assume immediately afterward the vaunt of hope, which involuntarily rises above time present : " Oh, how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee !" (v. 19). Van O.

16. *Let Thy face shine on Thy servant ; save me in Thy mercy.* The first clause contains an allusion to the sacerdotal benediction recorded in Num. 6 : 25. " Grant me a sensible assurance of Thy favor." This he asks because he is His servant, a relation implying the necessity of God's interposition in his favor. While God is God, He cannot leave His faithful servants to perish. Even here, however, his appeal is to God's mercy, as the only source or means of safety.

17. He distinguishes himself, as one who calls upon God, from the wicked who do not, and appeals to the righteousness of God as requiring that defeat and disappointment should fall, not upon the class to which he belongs and of which he is the representative, but upon that represented by his enemies, of whom it has been well said that they are not reckoned sinners because they are his enemies, but enemies because they are sinners ; or, in other words, enemies to him because they are the enemies of God. A.

18. Lying lips. It is not calumny, nor treachery, that does the most harm in the world ; they are continually crushed, and are felt only in being conquered. But it is the glistening and softly spoken lie ; the amiable fallacy ; the patriotic lie of the historian ; the provident lie of the politician ; the jealous lie of the partisan ; the merciful lie of the friend ; and the careless lie of each man to himself, which darken and degrade our life. Ruskin.

It would seem, in fact, that there is scarcely an assailable point or quality in us, which is not capable of being suborned into the service of lying lips. There is the lie of sheer cowardice, told to evade some threatened personal danger, or the formidable lion of public opinion, or the ridicule of unprincipled associates.

There is the lie of cupidity and money-making, direct or indirect; the lie of convenience, the lie of shame, the lie of flattery, with its double wrong. Then there are all the *degrees* of falsehood—exaggerations, or adding to the truth, extenuations, or taking from it—of which it is enough to say that when once a living conscience takes knowledge how easily their falsifying processes go on, it must watch their beginnings as we watch the first symptoms of pestilence. There are equivocations, deceptions in which people allow themselves by first practising the self-deception that a falsehood half-hidden from men is wholly hidden from God, or that it is safe to go half-way in that which is an abomination to Him. You need not be reminded that there are acted falsehoods, of manner and gesture, of signs and ornaments, of pretended friendship and assumed cordiality and hypocritical devotion; nor need it be repeated to you that speech is no more an expression of the mind than action is, and that by “lying lips” Scripture means all the lies that the whole body can tell, and that one of them is just as hateful to the God of truth and just as sure of judgment as another. F. D. H.

19-24. His well-grounded hope now brings triumphant certainty, and this breaks forth in glad acknowledgment of God’s goodness to the righteous, and an exhortation to all to wait on Him in unshaken confidence of heart. D.

19. His prayer is heard and his soul is thereby deeply affected with a sense of the great goodness which God has ever in reserve, secretly stored away but ever in readiness for its fit occasion. C.—Mark the phrase “Laid up for them;” His mercy and goodness is intended for them, as a father that lays by such a sum of money as a portion for such a child. Gurnall.

This text is the expression of a Divine law, the law of *God’s wise reserve in dispensing His favors*. He does not reveal Himself, nor bestow His blessings, nor develop His purposes, nor mature His plans all at once. He gives liberally, but not the whole. He keeps something always in the background; there is always something better in store for those who fear Him. There is in His Word, His promises, His providences a hidden element which comes out only through time, and experience, and search, and diligent effort. There are certain great blessings of God which no man is able to receive at once without preparation. And it ought not to be forgotten that a part of this preparation depends upon ourselves; and that therefore it is sometimes *our* fault that the laid-up goodness is kept back, . . . But God’s

goodness is not always kept hidden. If there is *reserve*, there is also *unfolding*. If there is laying up of goodness, there is also working it out publicly before men’s faces. But if we want the goodness *wrought out*, we must have faith in the goodness which *is laid up*. If we want the performance, we must trust the promise. V.—In the former clause, God’s goodness is said to be *laid up*; in the latter, to be *wrought*. Goodness is laid up in the promise, wrought in the performance; and that goodness which is laid up is wrought for them that trust in God; and thus, as God’s faithfulness engageth us to believe, so our faith engageth God’s faithfulness to perform the promise. Hardy.

Oh, how great is Thy goodness! How profound are the counsels of it; how rich the treasures of it; how free and extensive the communications of it! Those who are interested in this goodness are described to be such as fear God and trust in Him, as stand in awe of His greatness and rely on His grace. This goodness is said to be *laid up for them* and *wrought for them*. There is goodness laid up for them in the other world, an inheritance *reserved in heaven*, and there is a goodness wrought for them in this world, goodness wrought in them. There is enough in bank and enough in hand. This goodness is laid up in His promise for all that fear God, to whom assurance is given that they shall want no good thing. But it is wrought for those that trust in Him—that by faith take hold of the promise, put it in suit, and draw out to themselves the benefit and comfort of it. If what is laid up for us in the treasures of the everlasting covenant be not wrought for us it is our own fault; because we do not believe. H.

God always takes the initiative. His grace always anticipates us. Forgiveness was waiting for us long before we ever sought it. Spiritual blessings wait to descend upon us, and have waited so long, not because God was not willing to give them, but because we had not truly sought them nor been prepared to receive them. We can never anticipate His grace and willingness. All things that we may wisely have are ready for us. J. R. Miller.—The Lord has laid up in reserve for His people supplies beyond all count. In the treasury of the covenant, in the field of redemption, in the caskets of the promises, in the granaries of providence, the Lord has provided for all the needs which can possibly occur to His chosen. Overwhelming are the proofs of the Lord’s favor to believers, history teems with amazing instances, and our own lives are full of prodigies

of grace. We serve a good Master. Faith receives a large reward even now, but looks for her full inheritance in the future. S.

God never gives all He has to give. The time never comes when He has nothing left to bestow. We never reach the best in Divine blessings. The unrevealed is ever better than the revealed. There is no danger that we shall ever come to the end of God's goodness, or to any experience for which He will have no blessing ready. Yet the Divine goodness is not emptied out in heaps at our feet, when we first start in faith's pathway. Rather, it is kept in reserve for us until we need it, and then disbursed. That is the thought in these words: "How great is Thy goodness which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee." The goodness is *laid up*, stored away, kept in reserve. This is the Divine method both in providence and in grace. God laid up goodness in the creation and preparation of the earth. So far as we know, there has been nothing new created since the beginning, but there has been a continual succession of developments of hidden treasures and powers, to meet the new needs of the multiplying and advancing race; and in grace the Divine method is the same. God's storehouses of spiritual truth never are opened to us until we really need their blessing. They are placed, so to speak, along our life-path, the right supply at the right point. The best of God's goodness is "laid up" in heaven; hence, to a Christian death is always a glorious gain. The best things can only be gotten when we pass through death's gate into the Father's house. Thus this principle of reserved goodness runs through all God's economy. Blessings are "laid up" and are gotten as we need them. Every experience brings us to its own store. Sorrow comes, and, veiled in the sorrow, the angel of comfort comes too. It grows dark, and then the lamps of promise shine out. Losses are met, and there is a Divine secret that changes loss into gain. A bitter cup is given, and it proves to be medicine for our soul. Death comes, and seems the end of all, but lo! it is only the beginning of all, for it leads us away from empty shadows to eternal realities. *J. R. Miller.*

For them that put their trust in Thee. How clearly does reason command me to trust Him, absolutely and implicitly to trust Him, and to distrust myself? He is essential, infinite perfection, wisdom, power, and love. There is nothing to be trusted in any creature but God working in it, or by it. I am altogether His own, by right, by devotion, and

by consent. He is the giver of all good to every creature, as freely as the sun gives its light, and shall we not trust the sun to shine? He is my Father, and has taken me into His family, and shall I not trust my heavenly Father? He has given me His Son as the greatest pledge of His love, and "shall He not with Him also freely give me all things?" His Son purposely came to reveal His Father's unspeakable love, and shall I not trust Him who has proclaimed His love by such a messenger from heaven? He has given me the Spirit of His Son, even the Spirit of adoption, the witness, pledge and earnest of heaven, the seal of God upon me, "holiness to the Lord," and shall I not believe His love and trust Him? He has made me a member of His Son, and will He not take care of me, and is not Christ to be trusted with His members? I am His interest and the interest of His Son, freely beloved and dearly bought, and may I not trust Him with His treasure? He is in covenant with me and has "given me many great and precious promises," and can He be "unfaithful"? My Saviour is the "forerunner," who has "entered into the holiest," and is there interceding for me, having first conquered death to assure us of a future life, and ascended into heaven to show us whither we must ascend, and shall I not follow Him through death and trust such a guide and captain of my salvation? He is there to "prepare a place for me, and will receive me unto Himself," and may I not confidently expect it? *Baxter.*

20. In this, as in so many cases, the Psalmist strikes an answering chord in the common experience of men of all times. A large share of good men's troubles come out of the talk of others. Is the picture of the old English divine overdrawn, after all? Hear a few of his stately periods. "Every gossiping is, as it were, a court of justice; every seat becometh a tribunal; at every table standeth a bar, whereto all men are cited, whereat every man as it happeneth is arraigned and sentenced; no sublimity, no integrity, or innocence of life, no prudence or circumspection of demeanor can exempt any person from it; not one escapeth being taxed under some scandalous name or odious character, one or other. Not only the outward actions and visible practices of men are judged; but their retired sentiments are brought under trial, their inward dispositions have a verdict passed on them, their final states are determined—yea, God Himself is hardly spared." (*South.*) We grow ashamed of ourselves, if there is any true manhood left in us,

because we are so often drawn into this current of talk about our neighbors. We hear the gossip, and we happen to know a fact or to have heard a piece of news, and almost ere we know it, in it goes into the common stock ; and, if we are not very careful, we find ourselves falling into censorious talk, flinging out sharp arrows of sarcasm or pulling a neighbor's defects a little farther out into the light ; and when we come to sit down and think over what we have said, unless we are very much hardened, we feel ashamed and sorry and indignant at ourselves, and are tempted to wish that we might never again be in society where people are talked over. But to get out of the reach of talk is to get out of society altogether ; and to get out of society is not only no man's duty, but it is the sin of any man who attempts it. God provides better for men than by withdrawing them from the world where their work lies. Man is delivered from temptation not by being taken out of it, but by being helped to conquer it. Man is not hidden from the strife of tongues by being withdrawn from it. God has a better refuge than that, and that is Himself. "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence from the pride of man ; Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues." In putting a man in right relations with Himself, God puts him in right relation to the world's talk. To quote the beautiful words of a living preacher, "If we are really Christ's, then back into the very bosom of His Father, where Christ is hid, there He will carry us. We, too, shall look out and be as calm and as independent as He is. The needs of men shall touch us just as keenly as they touch Him, but the sneers and strifes of men shall pass us by as they pass by Him and leave no mark on His unruffled life. It will be just as impossible when that time comes for us to work ourselves into a passion about yesterday's gossip as it was for Jesus to become a partisan in the quarrel about the divided inheritance ; and yet for us, just as for Him, this will not mean a cold and selfish separation from our brethren. We shall be infinitely closer to their real life when we separate ourselves from their outside strife and superficial pride, and know and love them truly by knowing and loving them in God." This, then, is the conclusion of the whole matter. In this world we must be exposed to the strife of tongues. You who are worried by men's talk ; you who are tempted to respect it as a rule of living ; you who care so very much about what the world says, hear His voice. Give your minds to character and not to talk.

Concentrate your effort and your thought upon being like Christ, and then the talk will wag on its own way and will not touch you as you walk the path which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. He shall hide you in the secret of His presence from the pride of man. He shall keep you secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues. V.

22. He confesseth the great distress he was in, and how weak his faith was under the temptation ; this he doth, that he may give the greater glory to God. Though faith seem to yield, yet it faileth not ; even when it is at the weakest, it is uttering itself in some act, as here the expression of David's infirmity in faith is directed to God and his earnest prayer joined with it. There may be in a soul at one time both grief oppressing and hope upholding ; both darkness of trouble and the light of faith ; both desperately doubting and strong gripping of God's truth and goodness ; both a fainting and a fighting ; a seeming yielding in the fight and yet a striving of faith against all opposition, and a settled stayedness of faith, as here. *Dickson.*

23. In this and the remaining verse he makes a further application of the truth, which he had just attested from his own experience, to the case of all God's saints or gracious ones, at once the subjects and the objects of benignant dispositions, those who are merciful because they obtain mercy. A.—On the one hand God preserves the faithful, and so approves Himself true to His promises ; on the other hand, in abundant measure, He recompenses those who practise pride—before God the Lord the sin of sins. D.

The glow of personal attachment to Jehovah which kindles in the trustful words is eminently characteristic. It anticipates the final teaching of the New Testament in bringing all the relations between God and the devout soul down to the one bond of love. "We love Him because He first loved us," says John. And David has the same discernment that the basis of all must be the outgoing of love from the heart of God, and that the only response which that seeking love requires is the awaking of the echo of its own Divine voice in our hearts. Love begets love ; love seeks love ; love rests in love. Our faith *corresponds* to His faithfulness, our obedience to His command, our reverence to His majesty ; but our love *resembles* His, from which it draws its life. So the one exhortation is "love the Lord," and the ground of it lies in that name—"His beloved"—those to whom He shows His lovingkindness (v. 21). A. M.

The Lord preserveth the faithful.

God's providence is always good, but He needs our faithfulness, our truest and best work always to give full expression and result to the good that He plans. God never does His work unfaithfully, and we dare not charge to His providence the preventible accidents of life, those which come through men's carelessness or dishonesty or greed of gain or fault of any sort. We must remember that even the providence of God cannot work completely or perfectly without our little work, each and every one's little work, well done. It is not great deeds that God expects or requires of us, unless He has endowed us with large gifts and has given us great things to do. He gives us certain talents and puts us in certain relations, and then asks us to be faithful—nothing more. The man with the plain gifts and the small opportunities is not expected to do the great things that are required of the man with the brilliant talents and the large opportunities. "She hath done what she could" is the highest approving word that could be spoken of any one. J. R. M.

24. Take courage. Three things characterize and distinguish the courage of a sanctified heart. The *root*, whence it ariseth, is *love to God*; all the saints of God that love the Lord be of good courage. The love of Christ constraineth me to make these bold and brave adventures, saith the apostle. The *rule*, whereby

it is directed, is the *Word of God*—what the Lord hath pleased to leave on record for a Christian's guidance in holy pages. And the *end*, to which it refers, is *God*. For every sanctified man being a self-denying and a God-advancing man, his God is his centre, wherein his actings, his undertakings rest; and his soul is not, yea, it cannot be satisfied but in God. *Simeon Ash.*

The godly and the faithful are here called "those who hope in the Lord." They are to wait patiently, for this waiting has a glorious ending. This eye of hope patiently directed to Jehovah is the peculiarity of Old Testament faith. D.—Wonderful, indeed, is the hopeful trust of the saints of old in God, when we remember that they did not know Him as God manifest in the flesh. P.

To love the Lord is the path, and the only path, to hoping in the Lord. So had the Psalmist found it for himself. In his changeful, perilous years of exile he had learned that the brightness with which hope glowed on his lonely path depended not on the accident of greater or less external security, but on the energy of the clear flame of love in his heart. Not in vain had his trials been to him, which cast that rich treasure to his feet from their stormy waves. Not in vain will ours be to us, if we learn the lesson which he here would divide with all those "that hope in the Lord." A. M.

PSALM XXXII.

A PSALM OF DAVID. MASCHIL.

1 BLESSED is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

2 Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity,
And in whose spirit there is no guile.

3 When I kept silence, my bones waxed old
Through my roaring all the day long.

4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me:

My moisture was changed as with the drought of summer. [Selah

5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid:

I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD;

And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. [Selah

6 For this let every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found:

Surely when the great waters overflow they shall not reach unto him.

7 Thou art my hiding place; thou wilt preserve me from trouble;

Thou wilt compass me about with songs of deliverance. [Selah

8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go:

I will counsel thee with mine eye upon thee.

9 Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding :

Whose trappings must be bit and bridle to hold them in,

Else they will not come near unto thee.

10 Many sorrows shall be to the wicked :

But he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.

11 Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous :

And shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.

DAVID draws from his own personal experience general lessons for the good of all in the Church. David was for a whole year, after his sin of adultery, like one condemned, in the utmost misery. Psalm 51 was composed when in this misery ; Psalm 32 was written only after deliverance ; the former in the midst of the penitential struggle, the latter after inward peace had been again attained. The theme of this Psalm is the rich treasures of knowledge drawn from that abyss of inward need : the blessedness of forgiveness, the sincere, unreserved confession of sin as the way to it, and the protection of God amid all dangers, as well as joy in God, as its fruits. D.

In this Psalm David gives to the world his experience as a sinner. He tells us of the blessedness of forgiveness. He is blessed because his sins are taken away ; because his sins are covered or hidden, and that from God, not from men ; because he is treated as innocent. He tells us of the result of his attempts to cover his sin. His body suffered from the terrors of remorse. The old freshness of his heart was gone, like a running stream dried up in the sickening heat of the Eastern sun. He tells us of the remedy which he found. It was confession. True confession implies your viewing the fact of your sin in the same light in which God views it. Confession implies renunciation. . . . Whatever else this Psalm may teach us, it teaches us this broad truth that the forgiven penitent, under *God's* economy, is not a *wretched* man. While it is one of the saddest, is at the same time one of the most joyful of the inspired lyrics. It is no less the record of a bitter, penitential sorrow, than the expression of a heart full of praise. It comes to us to-day to tell us that the worst sinner, forgiven by God, is a happy man. V.

Beginning with the recital of his own experience, David here turns it into instruction and warning for others. He had long struggled with the sense of his sin, had long been crushed to the earth with his burden, because he would not humble himself before God ; but God had given him again the heart of a child. He had gone to his Father with the penitent confession,

“ I have sinned ;” and, as in the parable, the Father's heart moved toward His prodigal son when he was yet a long way off, so David found that his Father was ready to forgive—“ I said, I will confess ;” and “ Thou tookest away the guilt of my sin.” There can be little doubt that this Psalm was composed after Nathan came to him. Psalm 51 was the confession of his great sin and the prayer for forgiveness. This Psalm is the record of the confession made and the forgiveness obtained, and the conscious blessedness of his position as a son restored to his Father's house. There was a shelter for him there now—“ Thou art my hiding-place.” There was joy and gladness on his return—“ Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.” P.

Its value lies very much in the fact that, while it records David's personal experiences, and because it records them with the utmost simplicity and frankness, it expresses some of the cardinal and most common experiences of all godly men. It reflects his spiritual moods, reflects them so clearly that we see his inmost heart, and *seeing his, recognize our own*. For “ as face answereth to face in the glass, so heart of man to heart of man.” The stages of spiritual experience which it sets forth are not peculiar to one person, but belong to all who have entered on the life of the spirit. Nor are they peculiar to any period of spiritual development ; they belong to every period. The consciousness of sin, and the penitent confession of sin, the sense of forgiveness, and a growing trust in the forgiving love of the loving Father—these are not stages of spiritual experience through which we pass, *passing through them and leaving them behind*. They perpetually repeat themselves. The coming in of the Gospel has not removed us beyond their limits or emancipated us from their control. In respect of these, we are much where David was, having to “ acknowledge sin” and to “ confess transgression ;” aspiring after the blessedness of the man “ whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin,” though and because *he* would not hide it, “ is covered ;” rejoicing that the Divine “ hiding-place” is still open, and run-

ning into it to find ourselves, like the grateful Psalmist, "compassed about with songs of deliverance." *Cox.*

The *contrast between sin and grace* appeared in all its sharpness in David's inner life; and that life brings to view, as its external course advanced in a state of continual conflict, both the deep degradation of the fallen, sin-burdened man, and the elevation of a spirit richly endowed with Divine grace. To a greater degree than any other Old Testament character, he experienced the restlessness and desolation of a soul burdened with the consciousness of guilt, the longing after reconciliation with God, the struggle after purity and renovation of heart, the joy of forgiven sin, the heroic, all-conquering power of confidence in God, the ardent love of a gracious heart for God; and has given in his Psalms imperishable testimony as to what is the fruit of the law and what the fruit of faith in man. And in saying this, we have touched upon that particular in which David most powerfully affected the spiritual life of his people. *Oehler.*

It is no wonder that Augustin is said to have incessantly pored over this Psalm, and even to have had it written on the wall in front of his death-bed. It is remarkably free from allusions to outer and legal forms, and is thoroughly evangelic. What David learned first in suffering he pours out in spiritual song. He had gone through a hard struggle not with outward calamities, but with the far deeper trials of the heart and conscience, and then had come out into the sunlight of assured restoration and peace; hence the impressiveness of his words alike in regard to the conflict and the victory. T. W. C.—Luther, one day being asked which of all the Psalms were the best, made answer, "*Psalmi Paulini*;" and when his friends pressed to know which these might be, he said, "The thirty-second, the fifty-first, the one hundred and thirtieth, and one hundred and forty-third. For they all teach that the forgiveness of our sins comes, without the law and without works, to the man who believes, and therefore I call them Pauline Psalms; and David sings, 'There is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared.' This is just what Paul says, 'God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all.' Thus no man may boast of his own righteousness. That word, 'That Thou mayest be feared,' dusts away all merit, and teaches us to uncover our heads before God, and confess it is mere forgiveness, not merit at all." *Table Talk.*

1, 2. The first word of the Psalter, like that

of the Sermon on the Mount, is a beatitude. The next beatitude of the Psalter is that of him whose sin is confessed, forgiven, subdued. Paul mentions David as describing the declaration of blessedness of those whose iniquities are dismissed, and whose sins are veiled off from sight by one great act of amnesty. Not without reason did Luther speak of this and three other Psalms as "right Pauline Psalms." *Bishop Alexander.*

Blessedness is not in this case ascribed to the man who has been a diligent lawkeeper, for then it would never come to us, but rather to a lawbreaker, who by grace most rich and free has been forgiven. Self-righteous Pharisees have no portion in this blessedness. Over the returning prodigal the word of welcome is here pronounced. The word rendered forgiven is in the original *taken off* or *taken away*, as a burden is lifted or a barrier removed. S.

How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute sin, *i.e.*, account it as standing against him in law, unforgiven! But this man must be profoundly sincere in his penitence, one in whose spirit there is no deceit, no insincerity; who makes no hypocritical pretensions, but whose confessions mean all they say. David had felt the sweet relief which comes of such confession and of the resulting sense of pardon from God. Well might he exclaim, O the blessedness of this sense of pardon! C.

Sin is here spoken of under three appellations, so as to include the whole idea of sin in all its manifestations: First, as "transgression" or departure from God, and open defection from his covenant. Secondly, as "a coming short of the mark," a *not* doing of our duty. Thirdly, as including in the idea of wrong-doing the guilt and also the punishment. And there is a threefold blessedness. The man is one who has his transgression *taken away* (literally, who is *lightened of the burden* of sin); who has his sin *covered*, so that he is in God's sight as one who has not done the sin; and one *to whom Jehovah reckoneth not iniquity*, which, according to Paul's interpretation (Rom. 4: 6-9), is equivalent to saying that he is one whose faith is reckoned for righteousness. The non-reckoning of iniquity and the reckoning of righteousness are convertible terms; and the righteousness so reckoned is faith, or a righteousness without works. But God only thus forgives and justifies one who, with all truth and sincerity of heart, confesses his sin, making no reservation, no excuses, no attempts still to hold fast and hide some darling lust. "David's principal purpose in this text is, according to the

interpretation of Paul, to derive all the blessedness of man from God." P.

The heaping together of synonyms for sin and forgiveness is not tautology or feebleness.

The Psalmist's heart is so full of its blessedness that one utterance is not enough to empty it; and though all the clauses describe the same thing, they do so with a difference. This is true with regard both to the words for sin and for pardon. As to the former, the three designations of sin present three aspects of its hideousness. The first, rendered "transgression," seems to mean, literally, separating or breaking loose, and hence comes to signify apostasy or rebellion. Sin, then, is departure or revolt. It is thus regarded in its gravest aspect as in relation to God, being not merely a breach of some impersonal law, but having reference to a Lawgiver, from whom it is departure and revolt. That is its blackest character, and is precisely what we are least willing to recognize. Many of us are ready to acknowledge faults, weaknesses, derelictions, or even crimes, but we do not like to think that all these have relation to him. "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned." The very notion of sin implies God. It is the rising of our wills against His will, the voluntary rending apart of an existing union. We are knit to God, and, so far as we can, we break the tie by our sin, and, like the prodigal son, seek independence in the irresponsible use of the goods which we think our own, in the distance of the far country. "Departing from the living God" is the definition of sin. The word rendered "sin" is literally missing a mark. What is rebellion in regard to God is, in regard to myself, missing my aim, whether we consider the aim as that which a man is intended by his very make to be and do, or as that which he proposes to himself by his act. All sin tragically fails to hit the mark in both aspects. It is a fearful failure as to reaching the ideal of conduct and as to winning the desired satisfaction. It keeps the word of promise to the ear and breaks it to the hope, ever luring by flattering and lying promises; and if it gives the poor delights it promised, adding something else that embitters them all. The word rendered "iniquity" means something twisted or distorted, and seems to embody the same metaphor as do our words "right" and "wrong"—namely, the contrast of the crooked, wandering ways of sin with the straight line of duty.

The three expressions for forgiveness are also eloquent in their variety. The first means to take away, and implies the lifting and removal

of a burden. It is more than the holding back of penal consequences; it is the taking away of the evil thing itself; and that not merely in the multitudinousness of its manifestations in acts, but in the depth of its inward source. The second, "covered," paints forgiveness as putting the foul thing out of sight, and so shrouding it from the pure Divine eye that his action is no longer determined by its existence. The third describes forgiveness as God's "not reckoning" a man's sin to him. God does not deal with the forgiven man as having done sin, nor let his sin hinder the free flow of God's love. So all three words set forth one idea in various phases, and express the entire removal of sin, so that it does not interfere with the flow of God's love. He who is thus forgiven has his spirit purged from "guile;" for purifying comes with God's pardon. A. M.

Impute. Not charging upon account. As sin is a defection from the law, so it is forgiven; as it is offensive to God's holiness, so it is covered; as it is a debt involving man in a debt of punishment, so it is not imputed; they all note the certainty, and extent, and perfection of pardon—the three words expressing sin here being the same that are used by God in the declaration of His name (Ex. 34:7). *Charnock.*—Aben-Ezra paraphrases it, of *whose sins God does not think*, does not regard them so as to bring them into judgment, reckoning them as if they were not; *does not count or calculate them*; does not require for them the debt of punishment. To us the remission is entirely free, our Sponsor having taken upon Him the whole business of paying the ransom. His suffering is our impunity, His bond our freedom, and His chastisement our peace; and therefore the prophet says, "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." *Leighton.*

No guile. The one condition is that there be no dishonesty, no attempt to disguise, gloss over, extenuate, or justify the sin. The total absence of such a spirit proves that sin, great and deadly as it may be, is a stranger; that though admitted it is not welcomed, that when it is once clearly seen it is hated. David speaks of the first, the strongest and most enduring temptation of a sinner, and in stating the one condition of pardon he goes to the very root of evil. *Cook.*—They do not dissimulate their guilt; they attempt no deception in regard to it, whether before God or their own consciences; they do not deny, or extenuate, or conceal it; but they make frank and full acknowledgment before God of the evil they have done. W. H. G.

In whose spirit there is no guile; he does not say, "There is no *guilt*" (for who is there that lives, and sins not?), but no *guile*; that does not dissemble with God in his professions of repentance and faith, and in his prayers for peace or pardon; but in all these is sincere and means as he says; that does not repent with a purpose to sin again, and then sin with a purpose to repent again. H.—*No guile*; no falseness, that is, either to himself or to God. Of this guilelessness Leighton remarks: "Nothing is more pleasing to God, who seeth the heart, nothing more like to God; and therefore is it most pleasing to Him, because it is most like Him." P.—The man whose *transgression* is forgiven; whose *sin* is hidden, God having cast it as a millstone into the depths of the sea; whose iniquity and perversion is not reckoned to his account; and whose *guile*, the deceitful and desperately wicked heart, is annihilated, being emptied of sin, and filled with righteousness, is necessarily a happy man. A. Clarke.

3, 4. For, as he had learned from his own experience, whoever does not pour out his whole corruption in confession before God, only tortures himself till he unburdens himself of his secret curse. The more he strove against confessing, the louder did his conscience speak, and seeing it was not in his power to silence this inner voice, in which God's wrath found expression, he cried for help; but because it was with a yet unbroken heart, he got no answer. He cried all the day, for God's punishing right hand lay heavy on him night and day, the sense of the Divine anger gave him no rest. A fire burned within him, which threatened to consume him utterly. D.—So long as he kept silence, laboring to smother his convictions and conceal his great sin, the dreadful agony was in his soul; his very bones—the firmest and least impressible part of his bodily frame—waxed old under the wasting torture, and he could only groan and sigh or moan all the day. Yes, all the day and all the night as well, the hand of God, impressing a sense of guilt, was heavy upon him. "My moisture," the juice of my life—the figure being taken from vegetable life and meaning the fresh and joyous life-power—turned to the drought of summer. From being a green, living tree, I became a dry stick. These figures from the vegetable world, applied to his body to set forth the agony of his soul, are intensely expressive. What a life was this! Who can measure the woes of a guilty conscience, heightened by a sense of that awful eye of God, impressing His

purity and justice, and making the soul afraid of His wrath! "Selah" calls for a thoughtful pause over these startling but most instructive facts of his heart-history. C.

Of all the anguish in the world, there is nothing like this—the sense of God without the sense of nearness to Him. *Elizabeth Prentiss*. —There is something in guilt or the state of guiltiness that amounts to a virtual shutting up or suppression of all affinities with supernatural being. It condenses all the Godward and pure aspirations and gathers them in, by the dreadful recoil it makes on the soul's own centre. It pronounces a damnation, too, upon itself, and by its own remorseful severities makes the sentence good. Falling away thus from God, and closing itself up as regards all supernatural relations and perceptions, it becomes self-centred, isolated, a worm in the ground, having its belongings there and not in the element of day. *Bushnell*.

In any really deep Christian experience, the great feeling of need, the energy of repentance, the agony of conviction, connects itself with a conscious estrangement from the heavenly Father, through a violation of His holy and merciful law; not merely a single act of sin, or a series of such acts; but a state of the nature and a habit of the life ungratefully and wickedly separated from God. Of course, so long as there is a feeble or lax sense of God's holiness, of the sanctity of His requirements, of the exceeding height and breadth and length of His commandments, and of the widespread mischief and unutterable wrong even of a single infraction of it sending its jar of discord through the spiritual world, and directly offending such a Being as God is, so long this piercing and bitter conviction will not be realized. Some lighter and easier solution than the cross will satisfy the mind, or seem to satisfy it, till a deeper movement agitates the heart and breaks up its inmost fountains. Whenever that hour comes, there comes with it a cry for full redemption, such a redemption as only the suffering of Him who is both man and God can give. F. D. H.

5. The end of the struggle—confession, and so forgiveness and peace. God covers sin, but man must not cover his sin before God. "If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." The former part of this verse contains the *resolve*, "I would acknowledge;" the second, the *expression* of the resolve, "I said."—**And Thou.** The pronoun is emphatic—it was *God's* doing. To *Him* he made his confession; *He* forgave. The

same words are used here of sin and its forgiveness as in v. 1. P.

The transition is described as sudden and complete; conscience once awakened finds no respite, seeks no delay; confession comes at once, at once followed by forgiveness. This accords exactly with the narrative. Nathan asks no more from the king, and at once declares his pardon. Observe that in this verse David again uses the three words of v. 1 to denote his sin, together exhausting all aspects, save that of rebellious and impenitent wickedness, from which he is free. *Cook.*—The three words for sin are repeated, though in a different order, and the act of confession is thrice mentioned, as the act of forgiveness was. The fulness of the pardon and its swiftness are emphatically given by the brief words, by the double designation, “the iniquity of my sin,” and by the representation of pardon following on the resolve to confess, before it was put into act. So eager was the Divine love to forgive, that it waited not for the actual confession, but anticipated it with its ready forgiveness. A. M.

He sums up the result in a single sentence: “Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” He has a whole catalogue of joyful consequences of his confession to present to us; but he is careful to make it perfectly clear at the outset that all these consequences are linked with forgiveness. The man is not blessed who can *forget* his sins; who can *blind himself* to them; who can *divert his mind* from them; who can temporarily *escape their consequences*. Blessed is he, and *only* he, whose transgression is *forgiven*. Thus we get back to the key-note of the Psalm. V.

The teaching of the Psalms on the *forgiveness of sins* is exactly the same as that of New Testament Scripture. Forgiveness is with God. It is bestowed of His free grace, and for His name’s sake, on those who confess and desire to forsake sin. And it is a present forgiveness, assured to the conscience by God’s Word—cleansing the soul and clearing the sinner from every charge of guilt. What the thirty-seventh Psalm was to the pious in perplexity, the thirty-second must have been to Hebrew penitents. It tells of transgression taken away, as an intolerable burden is removed; of sin covered, so that the sinner is before God’s judgment as if he had not sinned at all; and of iniquities not reckoned to the worker thereof. This it is which Paul quotes in one of his chief arguments on justification (Rom. 4:6). D. F.

Here is a clear note of joy over the blessed ex-

perience of him who pours out his heart to God—a musical Yea and Amen to the great truth of justifying grace. D.—The happiest being on earth is he who looks on all his manifold and great transgressions, and while he loathes himself on account of them, can say, “I am pardoned.” This recollection melts him. It fills his heart with unutterable love for his dying Lord; it makes His very name precious to his soul. Whether in heaven or in earth, this is the character and this the happiness of the Christian—he is a pardoned sinner—he feels and acts as a pardoned sinner. *C. Bradley.*—And the only way to secure that pardon and happiness is by coming to that great Fountain that is opened for sin and for uncleanness, and resorting to that of which the Psalmist had a vision far in the future, and you and I have a clear sight conspicuous in the past—the cross on which Jesus Christ has taken away the sin of the world. Without that sure work done for us and in us, our consciences appeased, the burden lifted off our shoulders, there may be mirth and riotous gladness, there may be satisfaction in accomplished desires and fulfilled ambitions and gratified loves or lusts; but permanent and deep and central blessedness there will not be until we have lost our sin and found ourselves at the foot of the cross. A. M.

The sinner who confessed obtained mercy, and that very mercy caused the sinner to confess. This is a circle, you say. So it is; and it is like God. All the worlds are globes, and all their paths are circles. His dispensations circulate. All good comes forth from Himself, all glory returns to Himself. His mercy displayed broke the stony heart, and caused the confession to flow; the confession flowing opened the way for mercy to enter. If I have not a broken, contrite heart, God’s mercy will never be mine; but if God had not manifested His mercy in Christ, infinite and free, I could never, never have a broken, contrite heart. *Arnot.*

All true love to God is preceded in the heart by these two things—a sense of sin and an assurance of pardon. There is no love possible—real, deep, genuine, worthy of being called love of God—which does not start with the belief of my own transgression, and with the thankful reception of forgiveness in Christ. You do nothing to get pardon for yourselves; but unless you *have* the pardon you have no true love to God. That, and that alone, is the road by which we come to possess the love of God, as a practical power, filling and sanctifying our souls. The Bible tells you, and the

Gospel and the cross of Christ tell you, *no love without pardon*, no fellowship and sonship without the sense of sin and the acknowledgment of transgression! . . . Unmistakably our Lord teaches (Luke 7:47) that forgiveness comes first to us who have nothing, not even love, to pay with, and that it unlocks the flood-gates of the heart as nothing else will. We are not pardoned because we love, but we love because we are pardoned. We are pardoned because He loves us, and the knowledge of His forgiving love melts our hearts. Jesus seems to teach us that there must be this experience of forgiveness before there is real and deep love. Certainly the principle involved in these words has been proved true in all the history of Christianity since they were spoken. Forms of Christianity which minimize sin, and have little to say about pardon, have always been, and always will be, cold and stagnant. The one power that sets souls aflame with a holy and self-sacrificing love is the experience of God's pardoning mercy in Jesus Christ. The measure of our consciousness of forgiven sin will be the measure of our love. A. M.

6. And now, because of the grace thus vouchsafed to every repentant sinner, David would encourage all the godly to seek Him who deals so graciously with sinners. P.—The time when God may be found is when the great waters swell about the despairing; when heart and flesh faileth; when there is help and hope in no earthly arm. “Man's extremity is God's opportunity.” It is when it seems as if even God could not make this trial tolerable, or this path passable, or this hindrance a help; it is when we are weakest, and most in doubt, when we know not what to pray for as we ought; in hours of pain, of bereavement, of poverty, of betrayal, of suspense, of misunderstanding, of sore temptation—it is then that God is nearest and readiest and strongest and kindest, easiest found, and surest to supply all the need of those who put their trust in Him. “For this let every one that is godly pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found; surely when the great waters overflow they shall not reach unto him.” H. C. T.

7. How noble and eloquent the brief words (echo of the historical narrative) that tell the full and swift forgiveness that followed simple confession—and how effectively the music again comes in, prolonging the thought and rejoicing in the pardon! How sure he is that his experience is of priceless value to the world for all time, when he sees in his absolution a motive that will draw all the godly nearer to their

Helper in heaven! How full his heart is of praise, that he cannot but go back again to his own story, and rejoice in God his hiding-place—whose past wondrous love assures him that in the future songs of deliverance will ring him round, and all his path be encompassed with music of praise. A. M.

See what God can do for a sinner. Look at this sinful, defiled soul, but now raging and smiting in his passion, blighting the fairest flowers of domestic peace in his selfishness, crushed and withered by remorse, groaning under God's hand—and say if anything but Divine grace, Divine compassion, Divine forgiveness, can change such an one into the joyful singer of praises who speaks to us to-day through this familiar Psalm. V.—A sinner so lately tortured with a sense of guilt and shrinking before the awful eye of God now speaks sweetly of finding in this same God a hiding-place for his soul, a preserving hand against all danger and trouble, a God of ready and warm heart to gird him all about with joyous songs of deliverance! Is not this for a wonder and joy forever, that God can so freely and so fully forgive? “Compass me about with songs of deliverance” is singularly strong and expressive. It is not merely that his heart is full of them, but they invest him on every side; they enrobe him, they overspread him from head to foot—his glory and his covering! Here is a fit place for one more pause to think of these wonders of God's love. Hence, “Selah.” C.

When a man has surrendered himself in humbleness and penitence to God, and the proud spirit of self-excuse has passed away; when the soul has opened itself to all His influences and known their power; when the saddest and bitterest part of suffering is felt no longer as the wrath of the Judge, but as the discipline of a Father; when the love of God has melted the soul and fused it into charity—then the soul is reconciled to God, and God is reconciled to the soul; for it is a marvellous thing how the change of feelings within us changes God to us, or rather those circumstances and things by which God becomes visible to us. His universe, once so dark, becomes bright; life, once a mere dull, dreary thing, “dry as summer dust,” springs up once more into fresh luxuriance, and we feel it to be a Divine and blessed thing. We hear the voice of God as it was once heard in the Garden of Eden whispering among the leaves; every sound, once so discordant, becomes music, the anthem of creation raised up with everlasting hallelujahs to the eternal throne. Joy is not delayed till we de-

serve it. Just so soon as a sinful man trusts that the mercy of God in Christ has done away with his transgression, the ring, and the robe, and the shoes are his, the banquet and the light of a Father's countenance. F. W. R.

8, 9. These verses seem to be best taken as the Divine voice answering the confidence of v. 7. The "I" and "thine" in each correspond; and the loving counsel by a glance, which God will give to those who dwell near enough to Him to see, and love Him enough to follow the lightest indication of His will, contrasts with the obstinacy of the untamed animal nature, which needs rough, outward constraint. The sense of pardon makes men docile, and binds them to God in such sweet bonds that they are eager to catch the faintest hint of His wish, and feel the glance of His eye as a mightier constraining power than all force or external restraints or impulses. Obedience extorted by force is no obedience, and a heart that is only brought near to God by "bit and bridle" is an untamed heart. They who watch for the guidance of the eye do not need the coarse restraints and constraints which lower natures require.

"*I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go. I will guide thee with Mine eye,*" scarcely sounds like words meant to be understood as spoken by David. They are the promise from heaven of a gentle teaching to the pardoned soul. A. M.

No man ever need be at a loss as to the path of duty. If he goes wrong, it is either because he does so wilfully or because he doesn't try to learn the right way. God stands ready to teach him his duty, to teach him by the written Word, by the lessons of Providence, by the promptings of the Holy Spirit. God makes this teaching work His own work. He wants men to look to Him for instruction. He doesn't tell them to watch church-members, and do as well as they do—or as poorly. He doesn't ask them to decide for themselves what He ought to teach, and then do what seems to them "reasonable;" for, as a rule, the less reason men have, the more ready they are to depend on it. He wants men to use their reason in finding out what He *has* commanded—not what they think He should have commanded—and then to do accordingly. He wants them to look to the one Example of godly living He has given among men, and to pattern after that. It is God's work to disclose the right way. It is man's work to walk in it. The showing is God's part. The going is man's. H. C. T.

Guide thee. How will the guiding come? God has made three great revelations of His

will: the Bible, Christ's life, the Holy Ghost's teaching. But in each there is the same underlying principle and central fact. That principle, that fact, is the mind of God. The mind of God shining through these things into a man is God's eye. It emits God to him. Faith is the inner eye of man. It is made to see, and to receive, and to follow truth. The eye of God and the eye of man must meet. Prayer clears the vision. Religious study clears the vision. Contemplation, the very looking into God's eye, clears the vision. More light streams in; and light used makes light again, till it grows so distinct and bright, that the eye of the man is an actual reflector of the mind of God. We see as God sees. We judge as God judges. And the more like-minded we grow, the greater the assimilation and the more intuitive our sense of God's will becomes about everything. In heaven we shall be holy, because we shall see Him face to face; that eye of God which lured us at the beginning, and never left us, has done it all. J. Vaughan.

The life of righteous men presents many an apparent contradiction of this truth. Men said to be under the guidance of that kindly eye do often walk in obscurity. Suffering is their lot. Their motives are impugned. They make no grand figure in the world. Their way is often rough, and rocky splinters pierce the feet. For loyalty to their convictions, friends desert them and enemies harass them. But none the less is it true, the Lord has never forgotten His faithful ones. That kindly eye has been upon them, that loving Providence over them. Haydn.

Life would be much calmer, freer, and stronger than most of us make it, if we really acted on the faith that God did lead us, and that He, rather than our poor foresight, had the shaping of our days. Constant watchfulness for the indications of His will is needed, if we are to realize His direction and to know the joy of swift obedience. "I will guide thee with Mine eye." We must be near Him, and looking ever toward Him, if we are to catch its meaning. The watchful servant does not need spoken orders. The choice for every man lies between that gracious guidance by the eye, and the rough way of telling "the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding," which road their master would have them go, by a tug at the rein and the pressure of the bit in their mouths. Many a hint of God's will escapes us for want of watchfulness. Before we complain of the perplexities which beset our choice, let us make sure that we have caught

all the indications which have been given. Wills held in suspense and equipoise until His will is plain are needed, if we would really be led by God. There is no more frequent cause of blindness to plain signs of duty than obstinate wishes opposed to it. The secret of all peace and of all practical wisdom is in submission. Whoso lets God's manifest will determine his is king of all kings and of himself, and will seldom be at a stand as to his road. Impatient pressing on the heels of God's purposes, before they have fully developed their direction, is sure to end badly. The true attitude is to watch and to wait, with wills held ready to bend either way, as He will. If it is not plain to patient, prayerful, acquiescent inquiry what He would have us do, it is plain that, for the moment, He would have us do nothing; and they who run before they are sent are sure to be out of the road. A. M.

9. It was a great misapprehension in our English translators to suppose that the bit and bridle were used to keep horse and mule from coming *too near*, instead of being used to break in those timid or wayward creatures and tame them to come to you, fearless and kind. The true version gives one of the finest illustrations of God's ways in discipline, and suggests that we use the understanding God has given us to see and appreciate His love and to let it have its subduing and winning power on our otherwise stubborn and reluctant hearts. Such is the spirit of this exhortation. It is but too often needed. Conscious guilt is shrinking and does not love to face the purity against which it has sinned. C.

The bridle which restrains the beast is often its ornament. The fact is familiar that animals have a kind of pride in the gaudy trappings which are the signs of their degradation, the proofs that they cannot be appealed to on the grounds of reason and conscience. So it is often true that a sinful man is proud of his rebellion against God, and boasts of it. If he but knew it, this is his humiliation. It stamps him as a creature which does not realize its relations to God and eternity. God would gladly deal with him as a free man, on generous terms; but if he refuses the guidance of the eye, he must take up with bit and bridle. If men will not come nigh unto God, and fall in with His gracious economy, they must be sternly restrained from interfering with it. V.

"If you *will* be as beasts before Him, God will deal with you as beasts;" the cold, sharp bit will be thrust between your teeth, and, haply, the lash not spared. It is better even

for a horse to be tamed with bit and bridle, and bent to useful work, than to live a useless, self-indulgent life, and at the last to rush off in wild stampede to unknown harms. And how much better is it for a man that he should have all needful corrections, and be won by them to a free and glad obedience, than that he should be left, unchastened, to travel on to the great darkness? *Cox.*—There is no more generous and noble-minded superior than God. When any seek to Him, He seeks no vantage of them, but He will bridle and bind to force them to acknowledge Him; and if they seek in to Him, He will pity, for it is His nature to pity poor afflicted and confused souls when they seek in to Him. Be not thou like the horse or mule, whose mouth must be holden by bridle and bit, else God shall bind and bridle foot and hand, and lay on till ye be forced to stand. Therefore in time make your prayer to Him while He may be found. *Dickson.*

God never uses harsh measures when more quiet ones will do. But if the believer will not listen to the gentle voice of God, then, rather than let him run on to his destruction, God will put on the bit and bridle. This is done not because He hates but because He loves the sinner. If affliction comes to you, and you are heavily burdened, you may be sure that by that experience God desires to teach you something that you could learn in no other way, and that it is important that you should know. *Schauffler.*—A Christian, when he sees trouble coming upon him, should not fly in the face of the instrument that brings, but in the face of the cause of its coming. Now the cause is thyself, thy base self, thy sinful self, and thy unworthy carriages toward God under all the mercy, patience, and longsuffering that God has bestowed upon thee and exercised toward thee. Here thou mayest quarrel, and be revenged, and spare not, so thou take vengeance in a right way; and thou wilt do so when thou takest it by godly sorrow. *Bunyan.*

Decision of character and firmness of purpose are very desirable qualities in the Christian. The Church of the present day needs men with independent minds and a strong, straight backbone, men who dare to say "No" clearly and earnestly. She needs men like Joshua and Daniel and Paul, who can withstand temptation, and even the false persuasion of friends. But we must beware, lest with the backbone we develop a tail and long ears. "Be not as the . . . mule." *G. H. Hubbard.*

10. The usual contrast between the lot of the ungodly and that of the righteous, as the

sum of all that has been said, and as a great religious axiom. P.—*Many pains (are) to the wicked; and (as to) the (man) trusting in Jehovah, mercy shall encompass him, or, He will encompass him (with) mercy.* In this and the remaining verse the Psalmist closes with the statement of a general truth, founded in necessity and verified by all experience, that sin produces misery and trust in God salvation. It is implied though not expressed in the first clause, that the sufferings of the wicked, while he still continues such, are hopeless and incurable, while those to which the righteous is subjected are salutary in effect and temporary in duration. Here again we may observe that the antithesis is not between the wicked and the absolutely righteous, but between the wicked and the man trusting in Jehovah, and that the effect ascribed to this trust is not the recognition of the man's inherent righteousness, but his experience of God's mercy, which implies that he is guilty and unworthy in himself, and can only be delivered from the necessary consequences of his sin by simply trusting in the mercy of the very Being whom he has offended. A.

He who sows sin will reap sorrow in heavy sheaves. Sorrows of conscience, of disappointment, of terror, are the sinner's sure heritage in time, and then forever sorrows of remorse and despair. Let those who boast of present sinful joys remember the *shall be* of the future and take warning. S.

Note that the forgiven man is in this verse described as trustful, and in the next verse as "righteous" and "upright in heart." Pardon leads to thankful confidence and to growing righteousness; and they are upright not who have not fallen, but who have been raised from their fall by God's pardoning mercy. The mutual relation of these words is instructive, and carries the full Gospel in germ. Note, further, the allusion in "compass him about" to the use of the same word in v. 7, where it is the expression of the Psalmist's own confidence; and here is the declaration of the Divine dealings. An unbroken ring of blessings, like a wall of fire, shall surround the pardoned, faithful soul, and there will not be a break in the circle through which a real evil can creep. A. M.

Mercy shall compass him about.

He shall be *surrounded* with mercy—as one is surrounded by the air or the sunlight. He shall find mercy and favor everywhere—at home, abroad; by day, by night; in society, in solitude; in sickness, in health; in life, in death; in time, in eternity. He shall walk amid mer-

cies; he shall die amid mercies; he shall live in a better world in the midst of eternal mercies. Barnes.—“Mark that text, ‘He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.’ I read it in my youth and believed it; and now I read it in my old age, thank God, I know it to be true. R. Aikins.

Mercy is antecedent to trust. Man trusts only because God is merciful. But the apprehension of the mercy succeeds trust. God is found merciful and precious as man trusts Him. So the sunlight precedes the power of vision, but as the eye is opened to behold it and appropriate it, its beauty and utility are discerned in ever-increasing measure. Trust, in the scriptural sense of the word, trust in the personal Saviour, implies faith in testimony. Trust is an advance in faith; it is its flower and fruit. Faith lays hold upon evidence; trust upon the *person* concerning whom the evidence is given. We believe the testimony which God hath given of His Son, and having believed, commit to Him the keeping of our souls and bodies. This committing is trust. The manifestation of mercy is according to the completeness of the trust. Trust is the soul's emptying of self for His filling with Himself. “In having nothing,” says Chrysostom, “I have all things because I have Christ. Having therefore all things in Him I seek no other reward, for He is the universal reward.” “None that trust in Him shall be desolate.” Mercy everywhere! “Earth is full” of it; and it is “great above the heavens.” Mercy every day! It “shall follow me all the days of my life.” Mercy in every experience! “All the paths of the Lord are mercy.” N. W. Wells.

Let none despair, let none presume; let none despair that are sorry for their sins and would be saved by Jesus Christ; let none presume that abide in the liking of their sins, though they seem to know the exceeding grace of Christ; for though the doors stand wide open for the reception of the penitent, yet they are fast enough barred and bolted against the presumptuous sinner. It cannot be that God should be prevailed upon by lips of dissimulation; He knows them that trust in Him, and that sincerely come to Him by Christ for mercy. It is, then, not the abundance of sins committed, but the not coming heartily to God by Christ for mercy, that shuts men out of doors. Bunyan.

11. And then the Psalm ends with a great cry of gladness, three times reiterated, like the voice of a herald on some festal day of a nation: “Rejoice in Jehovah! and leap for joy, O righteous! and gladly shout, all ye upright

in heart !” The depth of penitence measures the height of joy ; the “roaring all the day long” is changed into shouts of praise and gladness. Every tear sparkles like a diamond in the sunshine of pardon ; and he who begins with the lowly cry for forgiveness as a contrite sinner will end on the sunlit heights of joy “in the Lord,” and be made, by His indwelling grace, “righteous” and “upright in heart.” A. M.

He exhorteth them three times—be glad, rejoice, and be joyful ; and as he made mention of a threefold blessing, so doth he of a threefold joy. This same prophet in the next Psalm redoubleth his exhortations for the same effect. And the apostle to the Philippians saith : “Rejoice in the Lord alway : and again I say, rejoice.” Next perceive that this exhortation grows, for the word *be glad* properly in the original signifieth an inward and hearty joy, by the presence or hope at least of a thing desirable or good. The word *rejoice*, to express our joy by some outward gesture, sometimes used for dancing, as, “The hills skip for gladness.” The word *be joyful*, to cry for gladness, as the dumb man’s tongue shall sing. This gradation teacheth us that spiritual joy still increaseth in us by certain degrees until it come to the perfection of all joy, which is signified by the last word, importing a triumph and shouting after victory. *Symson*.—There’s never a joyful man alive but a believer. Will you say that men take pleasure in their

sins? Why, that is the *Devil’s* joy ; or that they rejoice in full barns and bags? That is the *fool’s* joy ; or that they rejoice in wine—that is, all dainties that gratify the palate? That is a *Bedlam* joy. Read and believe Eccl. 2 : 3. The whole book, but especially that chapter, is the divinest philosophy that ever was or will be. *Christopher Fowler*.

Why not make it the plan of our life to live in this exulting joy of experience which the Psalmist felt and uttered, which the apostle felt and uttered, which he recognized as possible, and as gained already in those to whom he was writing? Why not make it the purpose of our life and the constant burden of our prayer to God, that we may be brought into this state of royal experience of gladness and strength and peace and victory in God, as He has declared to us in His Son, as He has revealed to us in His promises ; so that others may be swept by the contagion of our joy into the kingdom of light, in which alone that joy can be realized ; so that we may feel all the time that our heavenly life is not far off, but here ; that we have the germ already, and the full flower only awaits the transplantation of the spirit to the celestial garden? We have the ray of light, and the meridian of glory is before us that our joy may be full ; and it never will be full except as we meditate upon the Word, and do the work which God assigns to us, and come to Him in the intimacy and freedom of filial prayer for the constant indwelling of His Spirit. R. S. S.

PSALM XXXIII.

- 1 REJOICE in the LORD, O ye righteous :
Praise is comely for the upright.
- 2 Give thanks unto the LORD with harp :
Sing praises unto him with the psaltery of
ten strings.
- 3 Sing unto him a new song ;
Play skilfully with a loud noise.
- 4 For the word of the LORD is right ;
And all his work is *done* in faithfulness.
- 5 He loveth righteousness and judgment [or,
justice] :
The earth is full of the lovingkindness of
the LORD.
- 6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens
made ;

- And all the host of them by the breath of
his mouth.
- 7 He gathereth the waters of the sea together
as an heap
He layeth up the deeps in storehouses.
- 8 Let all the earth fear the LORD :
Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in
awe of him.
- 9 For he spake, and it was done ;
He commanded, and it stood fast.
- 10 The LORD bringeth the counsel of the na-
tions to nought :
He maketh the thoughts of the peoples to
be of none effect.
- 11 The counsel of the LORD standeth fast forever,

The thoughts of his heart to all generations.
 12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the
 LORD ;
 The people whom he hath chosen for his
 own inheritance.
 13 The LORD looketh from heaven ;
 He beholdeth all the sons of men ;
 14 From the place of his habitation he looketh
 forth
 Upon all the inhabitants of the earth ;
 15 He that fashioneth the hearts of them all,
 That considereth all their works.
 16 There is no king saved by the multitude of
 an host :
 A mighty man is not delivered by great
 strength.

17 An horse is a vain thing for safety :
 Neither shall he deliver any by his great
 power.
 18 Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them
 that fear him,
 Upon them that hope in [or, *wait for*] his
 mercy ;
 19 To deliver their soul from death,
 And to keep them alive in famine.
 20 Our soul hath waited for the LORD :
 He is our help and our shield.
 21 For our heart shall rejoice in him,
 Because we have trusted in his holy name.
 22 Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us,
 According as we have hoped in thee.

GOD is the God of creation, of providence, of grace. This is, in a few words, the Psalmist's theme. Jehovah created the world. Jehovah governs the world ; and all nations and kings, whether they acknowledge Him or not, are but instruments in His hand. Jehovah especially reveals Himself in mercy and love to His own chosen people. This is one of the few Psalms in the first book which in the Hebrew is without an inscription. P.

1. *Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous*, so the foregoing Psalm concluded, and so this begins ; for all our religious exercises should both begin and end with a holy complacency and triumph in God as the best of beings and best of friends. H.—The Christian has his sorrows ; but these are not unsweetened. The Christian life has its shadows and its showers ; but these are not unmingled with bright beams of heavenly light ; and the saddest aspects of a Christian's daily life are but the April showers of spring that usher in the approaching bright and beautiful summer—the everlasting and the heavenly sunshine. Christian life is not a reluctant sacrifice wrung from us, but a joyous and free-will offering gladly and gratefully rendered by us. *Cum-ming*.—Therefore Psalmist, prophet, apostle, utter and repeat the call, Rejoice in the Lord. B.

Praise. The Hebrew word for *praise* is beautifully emphatic. It means, literally, acknowledgment or *confession*. In praising a fellow-creature, we may easily surpass the truth ; but in praising God, we have only to go on *confessing* what He really is to us. Here it is impossible to exceed the truth, and here is *genuine* praise. *Bengel*.—Praise is better than prayer. Praise is *comely* for the upright. It suits their character and destiny. It fits them for their lifework. It makes them acceptable to God, and prepares them for heaven. H. J. V.

2. Here musical instruments are first introduced in the Psalms. The precise construction of these various instruments is lost irrecoverably. We know that they were used as an accompaniment to the voice, and may safely presume that they were adapted for sacred music—well adapted, considering the genius and culture of the age. C.

3. *Sing unto Him a new song ; play well with joyful noise !* A new song implies the continual recurrence of fresh reasons and occasions for the praise of God, and also the spontaneous outflow of devout and thankful feelings in the hearts of the singers. A.

4, 5. The call to praise God is first based on a representation of His praiseworthiness as the God of revelation in the kingdom of grace. His word is uprightly meant, and without becoming untrue to itself in any respect, straightway fulfilling itself ; His every act is an act which fulfils itself in faithfulness, which proves the truth of His word and the kindness of His will. D.

4. *For right is the word of Jehovah, and all His work is (done) in faithfulness.* The word here meant is the word of promise, and the work is its performance or fulfilment. The word is right or upright, *i.e.*, uttered in sincerity and with a full determination to redeem it. *In faithfulness*, executed faithfully. A.

5. God has made it to appear in His works that He is a God of inflexible justice. He *loveth righteousness and judgment*. There is nothing but righteousness in the sentence He passes, and justice in the execution of it. He never did or can do wrong to His creatures, but is always ready to right those that are wronged, and does it with delight. He takes pleasure in those that are righteous. He is Himself the righteous Lord, and therefore loveth righteousness.

And He is a God of inexhaustible bounty. The benign influences which the earth receives from above and the fruits it is thereby enabled to produce ; the provision that is made for man and beast and the common blessings with which all the nations of the earth are blessed plainly speak that *the earth is full of His goodness*. What pity is it that this earth, which is so full of God's goodness, should be so empty of His praises ; and that of the multitudes that live upon His bounty, there are so few that live to His glory ! H.

6-9. From the present proofs of God's love in the earth, the thoughts of the sacred poet naturally go back to the creation of all things. And as he had before declared what the "word" and "work" of Jehovah are, in their essential characters (v. 4), so now he describes further the operation of that word, and the work which results therefrom. The heaven and the sea are mentioned as the theatre of God's almighty power, as the earth before of His lovingkindness ; and thus the universe is summed up. P.—All these manifest and wonderful proofs of goodness in the heavens above and in the earth beneath are to be ascribed to God, for He is *their Supreme Creator*. This is the logical connection between these verses and the preceding. All you see of goodness in earth or sky ; all these marvellous revealings of wisdom and beauty, of adaptation to the happiness of man and of myriads of other sentient beings, are to be ascribed directly and wholly to God their Creator ; "for by the word of the Lord were the heavens made." C.

6. The Word of the Lord is the command which called the universe into existence ; the Breath is the quickening spirit which brooded on the abyss, and gave life and form to all things. Cook.

7. *Putting*, literally, *giving*, storing, depositing. *Depths*, masses of water. The main point of the description is God's handling these vast liquid masses, as men handle solid substances of moderate dimensions, heaping the waves up and storing them away, as men might do with stones or wheat. A.—The vast masses of waters which had hitherto covered the entire surface of the globe were on the third day of creation brought within narrower compass, and large tracts of the submerged earth reclaimed and rendered habitable ground. The waters were *for the most part* congregated together in one vast body, instead of being universally diffused over the face of the earth. This is the state of things which we now contemplate ; the various great seas and oceans

constituting in fact but one body of water called in different regions by different names, as the Atlantic, Pacific, Indian, Southern oceans. Bush.

8. Stand in awe. Reverence is the supreme and eternal duty and grace of the created spirit. It is both the source and the issue of all godliness. As the spirit formed by religion, it is universal in its influence. It extends to all Divine things as well as to God himself : to His word, His ordinances, to His created temple of the world, and to all that is His ; in His presence more particularly it is awe. W. B. Pope.—True reverence for God includes both fear and love : fear, to keep Him in our eye ; love, to enthrone Him in the heart : fear, to avoid what may offend ; love, to yield a prompt and willing service : fear, to regard God as a witness and judge ; love, to cleave to Him as to a friend and father : fear, to render us watchful and circumspect ; love, to make us active and resolute : love, to keep fear from being servile or distrustful ; fear, to keep love from being forward or secure ; and both springing from one root, a living faith in the infinite and ever-living God. D. Moore.

9. *For* (it was) *He* (that) *said* (Be), *and it was* ; (it was) *He* (that) *commanded*, *and it stood*. The whole form of the sentence here is modelled upon that of the cosmogony in Genesis, where these two verbs repeatedly alternate. The common version, *He spake and it was done*, is liable to three exceptions : First, the emphatic pronoun of the Hebrew is not fairly represented ; second, the phrase *it was done* is much less striking than *it was* ; third, the Hebrew verb does not mean to *speak*, but to *say*. What was said every reader, could supply from recollection of the narrative in Genesis. A.—The works of His hands are the material embodiment of His creative word. That word was the vocal expression of a Divine idea ; and thought and word are made visible, and are presented to the eye, in the forms and the phenomena of external nature. The earth is an open and pictured page of a great volume ; the starry heavens are an illuminated manuscript ; above, beneath, within, around us, everywhere, we see the letters and words of a Divine writing—God's thoughts set forth by His own hand, inscribed in a manner at once luminous and significant, by His ideas and utterances becoming facts. T. Binney.

10, 11. From God's works in creation the Psalmist passes to His manifestations of Himself in history. On the one hand He frustrates all undertakings which are not in accordance

with His will ; on the other (v. 11), He gives eternal effect to His own purposes. The world's history is but a development of the principles which have their abode and origin in God. *Cook*.—The whole history of the world is the uninterrupted carrying through of a Divine plan of salvation, the primary object of which is His people, in and with them also the whole of humanity. D.

David puts the "counsel" and the "thoughts" of the people over against the "counsel" and the "thoughts" of God. The former God will bring to nought ; the latter shall stand forever. C.—*The counsel of the Lord standeth forever.* It is immutable in itself, *for He is in one mind, and who can turn Him?* The execution of it may be opposed, but cannot in the least be obstructed by any created power. Through all the revolutions of time God never changed His measures, but in every event the eternal counsel of God is fulfilled ; nor can anything prevent its being accomplished in its times. How easy may this thought make us at all times, that God governs the world, that He did it in infinite wisdom before we were born, and will do it when we are silent in the dust. H.

The Scripture shows us by numberless instances that God has not only upon special occasions made use of the power of miracles for the preservation of the righteous or the destruction of the wicked, but that generally He governs the moral world by providentially directing natural causes and influences to effect what He determines should be done ; that He rewards or punishes men by wholesome or pestilential air, by fruitful or barren seasons ; that He promotes or disappoints their designs by the uncertain changes of winds or weather ; that He employs and directs influences of nature to overthrow the most powerful armies, to defeat the wisest counsels, to determine the fates of men and kingdoms ; that the unsearchable wisdom of Providence directs and steers the most casual and accidental events, to change the fortunes of men and disappoint the most proper and natural means of success ; so that "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favor to men of skill ;" but that time and chance, directed by the providence of God, happens to them all. Nay, further, the Scripture teaches us that God not only directs natural causes and overrules the actions of men to fulfil His own good pleasure, but influences men's minds by strange concurrences of external causes, or by other more secret and unknown ways, to bring

about just events ; that He comforts good men and supports them in their designs ; that He terrifies bad men with strange amazements, to discover their own conspiracies and to fall into the snares which they had secretly laid for others ; that "He frustrateth the tokens of liars, and maketh diviners mad ; turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish ; that a man's heart deviseth his ways, but the Lord directeth his steps ; that there are many devices in the heart of man, but the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand ; and that the heart of the prince is in the hand of the Lord ; as the rivers of waters, He turneth it whithersoever He willcth." *S. Clarke*.

No knowledge is so important and so practical as that of God's plan. None so personally, universally and eternally affects us. That we can apprehend this knowledge in its simplicity is proof of the divinity of the human spirit. In this plan happiness is made to correspond with piety, sorrow with sin, and the plan works with certainty ; inexorable, yet simple. The force that binds the moon to the earth and the earth to "Sirius is simple but sure. So in the sweep of the ages, God's truth standeth forever and the thoughts of His heart to all generations. Eternity itself shall emphasize and illustrate it. R. S. S.

12. Here we have the doctrine of God's universal providence looked at in its special application to the chosen people, as often. It is, however, immediately connected with the preceding verse ; for the fact that Jehovah's counsels stand fast forever is a matter of consolation for the people whose God He is (147 : 19, 20), and whom He hath chosen for His own inheritance. P —The Jehovah who built the heavens and the earth is also in covenant relation with men, adopting them as His chosen people, His special inheritance. Plainly David brings together here those two grand ideas—that the God of Israel was at once the Creator of all worlds, and their own accepted Lord and King by special covenant. C.

13, 14. The children of men are all under His eye, even their hearts are so ; and all the motions and operations of their souls which none know but they themselves, He knows better than they themselves. Though the residence of God's glory is in the highest heavens, yet thence He not only has a prospect of all the earth, but a particular inspection of all the inhabitants of the earth. He not only beholds them, but He *looks upon them*, He looks narrowly upon them, so narrowly that not the least thought can escape His observation. H.

15. *The (God) forming all their hearts, the (God) attending to all their deeds. Forming implies knowing, which is more distinctly expressed, in reference to their outward conduct, in the other clause. God is also described as the Creator of the human soul in Zech. 12 : 1. His control of it is expressly affirmed in reference to kings (Prov. 21 : 1). A.—He is equally the Maker of all hearts—the sense being that He made them all by one creative act, rather than after the same fashion. “He understandeth” (much stronger than merely “considereth”) “all their works.” C.*

16, 17. The weakness and insufficiency of all human *power*, however great, as before of all human *intellect*. “King and mighty man and horse” (*i.e.*, “war-horse,” as elsewhere “chariot and horse”) are selected as types of earthly power in all its greatness. P.—The victory gained by the king, the rescue effected by the hero, are not the work of their own hands. Their great military power and bodily strength accomplish nothing without God, who can be mighty even in the weak. D.—The great number of the army, the great might of the warriors, the great strength or fleetness of the war-horse, are of no account as compared with God, much less as matched against Him. These ideas were exceedingly practical to David and his people in that militant age. They have a place therefore in such a religious song as this which we can but feebly appreciate. C.

18. Fear—hope. These are mutually helpful ; and they are not only never so beautiful, but never so influential as when they are blended. The fear promotes hope by the evi-

dence it affords ; and by keeping us from careless walking, which must always affect our peace and pleasure. And hope no less befriends this fear. For never is God seen so glorious, so worthy of all our devotedness to Him, as when we hope in His mercy. W. Jay.

21. *For in Him shall our hearts rejoice, for in His holy name have we trusted.* The Psalmist’s assurance of the future is derived from the possession of a faith already tried and proved to be truly in existence. It is because he has trusted, that he knows he shall rejoice. *His holy name*, in the wide sense which the epithet so often has in this book, nearly corresponding to *His glorious, His Divine name*. To trust in this name is to build one’s hopes on the manifestation of God’s attributes in previous acts ; to believe that what He has heretofore shown Himself to be, He will be still in the experience of His people. A.—His holy name is the ground of His Church’s faith, love, and hope ; for from thence cometh its salvation. It can confidently pray that the grace of the Lord may be bestowed upon it, for it waits upon Him ; and human waiting and Divine granting mutually condition each other. D.

22. *Be Thy mercy, Jehovah, upon us, as we have waited for Thee.* The faith implied in this hope being the sole condition of God’s mercy, its possession constitutes a claim upon that mercy, which is here urged as the sum of all the previous petitions. What is thus waited for cannot but be realized. A merciful and righteous God cannot, without denial of Himself, withhold that which His people thus expect. A.

PSALM XXXIV.

A PSALM OF DAVID ; WHEN HE CHANGED HIS BEHAVIOR BEFORE ABIMELECH, WHO DROVE HIM AWAY, AND HE DEPARTED.

1 I WILL bless the LORD at all times :
His praise shall continually be in my mouth.
2 My soul shall make her boast in the LORD :
The meek shall hear thereof, and be glad.
3 O magnify the LORD with me,
And let us exalt his name together.
4 I sought the LORD, and he answered me,
And delivered me from all my fears.
5 They looked unto him, and were lightened :
And their faces shall never be confounded.

6 This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him,
And saved him out of all his troubles.
7 The angel of the LORD encampeth round
about them that fear him,
And delivereth them.
8 O taste and see that the LORD is good :
Blessed is the man that trusteth in him.
9 O fear the LORD, ye his saints :
For there is no want to them that fear him.

10 The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger :
But they that seek the LORD shall not want
any good thing.

11 Come, ye children, hearken unto me :
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

12 What man is he that desireth life,
And loveth *many* days, that he may see
good ?

13 Keep thy tongue from evil,
And thy lips from speaking guile.

14 Depart from evil, and do good ;
Seek peace, and pursue it.

15 The eyes of the LORD are toward the right-
eous,

And his ears are *open* unto their cry.

16 The face of the LORD is against them that
do evil,

To cut off the remembrance of them from
the earth.

17 *The righteous* cried, and the LORD heard,
And delivered them out of all their troubles.

18 The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a
broken heart,

And saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous :
But the LORD delivereth him out of them all.

20 He keepeth all his bones :
Not one of them is broken.

21 Evil shall slay the wicked :
And they that hate the righteous shall be
condemned.

22 The LORD redeemeth the soul of his ser-
vants :

And none of them that trust in him shall be
condemned.

THIS is, like the last, a Psalm in which God's providence and moral government of the world are the subject of grateful acknowledgment. His guardian care of the righteous is more especially celebrated and applied to the individual circumstances of the Psalmist. This is one of the alphabetical Psalms. The order of the Hebrew alphabet is preserved, except that there is no verse beginning with the letter Vau. P. —This Psalm is eucharistic and didactic. It is full of thankfulness to the Almighty Deliverer, who defends the penitent against the ungodly. It is a lesson from experience for those who are tempted and afflicted. M.

Title. *By David, in (the time of) his changing (disguising) his reason before Abimelech, and he drove him away, and he went.* The incident referred to is recorded in 1 Sam. 21. David, having fled from Saul into the land of the Philistines, was brought into the presence of Achish, king of Gath, from whom he had reason to expect retaliation for injuries formerly received, and therefore pretended to be mad, an expedient which, in spite of its dubious morality, it pleased God to allow to be successful. In grateful recollection of this undeserved deliverance, not without some compunction with respect to the means by which he had secured it, David seems, at a later period of his life, to have composed this Psalm for popular instruction, to which it is peculiarly adapted by its clearness and simplicity, as well as by its alphabetic form, which is a valuable aid to the memory. *In his changing* does not necessarily designate the date of composition, but only that of the event which gave occasion to it. The common version, *behavior*, is inconsistent with the usage of the Hebrew word, which means taste,

judgment, understanding, reason. *Abimelech*, king's father, hereditary sovereign, was the traditional title of the king. His personal name was Achish. A.

2. My soul shall boast in the Lord.

Can any boasting be greater than to say, "I can do all things?" Yet in this boasting there is humility when I add, "Through Christ that strengtheneth me." For though God likes not boasting, yet He likes this boasting which arrogates nothing to ourselves, but ascribes all to Him. *R. Baker.*

2-6. There is somewhat very striking in the sudden transitions and the change of persons, observable in these few verses. "*My soul shall boast ;*" "*The humble shall hear ;*" "*I sought the Lord ;*" "*They looked to Him ;*" "*This poor man cried.*" There is a force and elegance in the very unconnection of the expressions, which, had they been more closely tied by the proper particles, would have been in a great measure lost. Things thus separated from each other and yet accelerated, discover, as Longinus observes, the earnestness and the vehemency of the inward working of the mind ; and though it may seem to interrupt or disturb the sentence, yet quickens and enforces it. *Chandler.*

4-9. He hesitates not to pour out his complaints to his heavenly Friend, detailing them one by one, just as a child might do in its mother's ear, and as he goes on it is pleasant to see how his heart is lightened and his voice takes on the ring of gladness and deliverance. He never forgets, however, what sort of a being Jehovah is, so as to presume upon His condescension. But confidence and love are to Him no presumption. He cannot keep within his own bosom the exuberance of his joy. If his

case be exceptional, he certainly sees no reason why it should not be the rule. Out of an evident experience he exclaims: "O taste and see that Jehovah is good, how blest the man who taketh refuge in Him!" E. C. B.

4. I sought the Lord, and He heard me. God expects to hear from you before you can expect to hear from Him. If you restrain prayer, it is no wonder the mercy promised is retained. Meditation is like the lawyer's studying the case in order to his pleading at the bar; when, therefore, thou hast viewed the promise and affected thy heart with the riches of it, then fly thee to the throne of grace and spread it before the Lord. *Gurnall.*

5. Looked unto Him, and were lightened. God lades the wings of private prayer with the sweetest, choicest, and chiefest blessings. Ah! how often hath God kissed the poor Christian at the beginning of private prayer, spoken peace to him in the midst of prayer, and filled him with light, joy, and assurance upon its close! *Stanley.*—This simple looking toward Jesus has been the strength and unction of believers in all ages. All the trials, perplexities, and difficulties of the Christian life of their own accord vanish away in this blessed unity of the Christian look. This look, so simple that the humblest child is capable of it, suffices for all. It is the cause of the most different effects, the cure of the most opposite evils; it is equally victorious over the difficulties of systems, and the perplexities of doubt, the assaults of pride, and the assaults of despair; the temptations of covetousness, and those of sorrow; the bitterness of hatred, and the weakness of natural affection. When we behold the cross, there proceeds from it a light which disperses all darkness, and a flame of love which consumes all hatred. What anguish, what pain, what bitterness can there be when Jesus Christ appears; when love Divine, love without measure, unconditional, unlimited, breaks forth upon us in the mystery of the cross! All reasonings, all combinations, all counsels, all methods, are not as regards the heart or even the understanding, worth a look directed to Jesus; and though all these means are useful, there is still need of the look, still need of the light to quicken all, and give strength to all. "They looked to Him," says the Psalmist, "and were lightened," at once illumined, warmed, quickened, consoled. *Vinet.*

The instinct of the devout heart is to tell Christ all its troubles, great or small, and He does not need beseeching before He answers.

He did not need to be told, either, but He would not rob us of the solace of confiding all our griefs to Him. Then let Jesus know all that troubles, welcome Him as a guest, tell Him everything, and He will cure all diseases and sorrows, or give the light of His presence to make them endurable. Consecrate to Him the strength which He gives, and let deliverances teach trust and inflame grateful love, which delights in serving Him who needs no service but delights in all. A. M.

We cannot pray too importunately for anything *which it is certain that it would be good for us to have*—more faith, more hope, more love, more strength to resist temptation, more light to show us the evil of sin and the preciousness of Christ. If our heart's longing be for spiritual blessings to ourselves or others, it cannot be too fervent, though even here we must be content to leave entirely to our heavenly Father the time at which and the manner in which He will grant what we ask. But no desire for an earthly gratification may be brought before God, no prayer for another position in life, or for success in anything we are trying for, or for deliverance from some trouble which comes to us as part of our daily lot, may be offered, without adding to the petition for it these or the like words: "Nevertheless not my will, but Thine be done." We should go to God about it with the assurance that He who so loved us as to give His Son for us, will not, cannot, deny us anything which would really be for our advantage. With this condition, we are at liberty to ask exactly what we like. We cannot ask too much, too often, too earnestly. E. M. G.

7. Encamping (is) *the angel of Jehovah round about His fearers—and (now) He has rescued them.* The angel, not only in the collective sense of angels, but in its specific sense, as denoting the angel of the Lord by way of eminence, the angel of the covenant and of the Divine presence (Isa. 63:9), in whom the manifestation of the Godhead took place under the Old Testament. As this angel was the captain of the Lord's host (Jos. 5:14; 1 Kings 22:19), his presence implies that of many others, and the word *encamp* is therefore perfectly appropriate. A.

For us the true Messenger of the Lord is His Son, whom He has sent, in whom He has put His name, and whose own parting promise, "Lo, I am with you always," is the highest fulfilment to us Christians of that ancient confidence, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him." The vision

of the Divine ever takes the form which our circumstances most require. David's then need was safety and protection. Therefore he saw the encamping angel, even as to Joshua he appeared as the captain of the Lord's host, and as to Isaiah in the year that the throne of Judah was emptied by the death of the earthly king was given the vision of the Lord sitting on a throne, the King eternal and immortal. Note that final word of *deliverance*. This Psalm is continually recurring to that idea. All the writer's thoughts were engrossed and his prayers summed up in the one thing—deliverance. He is quite sure that such deliverance must follow if the angel presence be there. But he knows, too, that the encampment of the angel of the Lord will not keep away sorrows, and trial, and sharp need. So his highest hope is, not of immunity from these, but of rescue out of them. And his ground of hope is that his heavenly Ally cannot let him be overcome. A. M.

8. Taste and see. There are some things, especially in the depths of the religious life, which can only be understood by being experienced, and which even then are incapable of being adequately embodied in words. "*Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good.*" The enjoyment must come before the illumination; or rather the enjoyment is the illumination. There are things that must be loved before we can know them to be worthy of our love; things to be believed before we can understand them to be worthy of belief. And even after this—after we are conscious of a distinct apprehension of some spiritual truth, we can only, perhaps, answer, if required to explain it, in the words of the philosopher to whom the question was put, "What is God?" "I know, *if I am not asked.*" Binney.

The religion of the Bible itself makes a personal spiritual experience of its power the only final evidence for it. "Taste and see that the Lord is good;" "if any man be minded to do the will of My Father in heaven, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself;" these are consenting representative declarations from the older writings and the later, which harmonize with many others in setting forth the fact that only by spiritual experiment of the Gospel can man be assured of its Divine origin, as ultimately proved by its Divine energy. All other impressions of this must be, in the nature of the case, preparatory, rudimental. Only by joyful experience of it is such a certainty produced in the mind of the inestimable beauty of sunshine, as could

have been formed, as can be shaken, by no argument conceivable. Imagine the attempt to make that beauty as certain as it is to us, to one who had passed his entire life in the unlighted cavern! So it is only by trying Christianity in its fitness to our deepest personal needs, of alliance with God, of moral renovation, of tranquillity, and of hope, that men can become utterly certain that it is from above; not a fabric, any more than the earth is, of human fancy, or a construction of human logic, or even a brilliant and lofty surmise of human aspiration; but a Divine system, as is the atmosphere, as is radiant light, presented by God to the world of mankind for their permanent sovereign life and peace. R. S. S.

The excellence and desirableness of God's gifts is a subject again and again set before us in Holy Scripture. All images of what is pleasant and sweet in nature are brought together to describe the pleasantness and sweetness of the gifts which God gives us in grace. And as it is natural to feel satisfaction and comfort in these gifts of the visible world, so it is but natural and necessary to be delighted and transported with the gifts of the world invisible; and as the visible gifts are objects of desire and search, so much more is it, I do not merely say a duty, but a privilege and blessedness, to "taste and see how gracious the Lord is." Newman.—The sweetness of honey, or wine, or meat is not known by looking on it, but by tasting it. Come near and try what it is to live in the love of God, and in the belief and hope of life eternal, and in universal obedience to the laws of Christ, and then tell us how these things do relish with you. You will never know the sweetness of them effectually as long as you are but lookers-on. Baxter.

Why should they be silent who have tasted that the Lord is gracious? Let them tell to all who are willing to listen what the Lord hath done for their souls. Let the compressed love which glows in renewed hearts find utterance in spoken praise. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits! Arnot.

Blessed the man that trusteth. The basis of the blessed life is laid in the Psalter, as in the New Testament, in simple trust in God. It is clear enough that it is the condition of true blessedness. For if we think of our needs, our exposure to danger, the storms that hurtle around us in our unsheltered nakedness, the evils that beset us on every side; if we think, on the other hand, of the absolute sufficiency and all-satisfying fulness and sweetness of that Divine heart, and the strength of that Almighty

hand, surely it needs no words to make it clear that the one safe place for us is beneath the shadow of that mighty wing and close to the throbbings of that strong and tender heart, and that the one thing which it is wise for us to do is to "trust in the Lord at all times, and to cast ourselves absolutely, utterly, thankfully, confidently upon His Almighty defence." The felicity of this confidence in the Lord is here based upon what that Lord is. "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!" and therefore, because He is, "blessed is the man that trusteth in Him." A. M.

9. *Fear Jehovah, ye His saints, for there is no want to His fearers.* The fear of God is here put, as in several other places, for the whole of piety or genuine religion, which must ever rest upon the basis of profound veneration. *His saints*, those set apart and consecrated to His service, and as such bound to be holy in the strict sense. The last clause represents this as no less the interest than the duty of God's people. They are called upon to fear Him, not only because fear is due to Him, but because it is the surest method of securing their own safety and supplying their own wants. A.

"Fear," as usual in the sense of filial reverence, not excluding the trust and love of simple piety. Whoever fears and trusts thus shall lack nothing good. The young lion, despite the care of his vigilant and powerful mother, may suffer hunger, but God's sons and daughters, never. C.—Not anything that God sees good for them shall those men want that fear the Lord. If health will do them good, if sickness will do them good, if riches will do them good, if poverty will do them good, if life will do them good, if death will do them good, then they shall not want them; neither shall any of these come nigh them if they will not do them good. *Bunyan*.—If anything be wanting to a good man, he may be sure it is not good for him, and then better that he doth want it, than that he did enjoy it; and what wise man will complain of the want of that, which if he had, would prove more gainful than hurtful to him? "No good thing will God withhold," and therefore not wants themselves, which to many are also good things. Want sanctified is a means to bring to repentance, to work in us amendment of life, it stirs up prayer, it weans from the love of the world, it keeps us always prepared for the spiritual combat, discovers whether we be true believers or hypocrites, prevents greater evils of sin and punishment to come; it makes us humble, conformable to Christ our Head, increaseth our faith,

our joy, and thankfulness, our spiritual wisdom, and likewise our patience. *Richard Young*.

10. All these verses are beautiful representations of the fulness, suitableness, completeness, and all-sufficiency of God in Christ to answer all the wants of His people. And is there not a vast elegance in the comparison taken from the hunger and rapacity of the lion, even the impetuosity of the young lion, to that of the patience and silent waiting of the faithful believer? A life of faith will find food in everything, because it is all founded in Christ. *R. Hawker*.—**They that seek the Lord shall not want any good.** As to this life, they shall have what is necessary to the support of it from the hand of God; as a Father, He will feed them with food convenient; what further comforts they desire they shall have as far as infinite wisdom sees good, and what they want in one thing shall be made up in another. What God denies them He will give them grace to be content without, and then they do not want it. Paul had all and abounded because he was content. Those that live by faith in God's all-sufficiency want nothing; for in Him they have enough. H.

11-14. This recipe for a happy life is the only one that fits all ages and countries and circumstances, and has never in a single instance failed. It rests on two immutable things, character and Providence. Whoso wishes to secure his real welfare must keep a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man. All the rest is in the hands of Him who sees the end from the beginning, and never makes a mistake. His Providence sometimes seems to run counter to His promise, but it is only "seems." Afflictions come, but only when there is a need be; they cease when the end is gained; and while they last the back is fitted to the burden. A, Scottish martyr, on the eve of execution, said, "God hath not promised to keep us from trouble, but to be with us in it, and what needs more?" Happy the man who has learned this secret of happiness and governs his life accordingly. T. W. C.

11. **Fear of the Lord.** This fear is a sweet composed reverence of God as our King, yea, as our Father; as very great, but no less good than great; so highly esteeming His favor as fearing most of all things to offend Him in any kind; especially if the soul have been formerly either under His apprehended displeasure, or, on the other side, have had some sensible tastes of His love. His children *fear Him for His goodness*; are afraid to lose sight of that or deprive themselves of any of its in-

fluences. They desire to live in His favor, and then for other things they are not very thoughtful. *Leighton*.—This fear of the Lord is the pulse of the soul; and as some pulses beat stronger, some weaker, so is this grace of fear in the soul. As long as the pulse beats we count not that the man is dead, though weak; and this fear, where it is, preserves to everlasting life. This fear of God also is sometimes like an intermitting pulse; there are times when it forbears to work, and then it works again. David had an intermitting pulse; Peter had an intermitting pulse, as also many other of the saints of God. *Bunyan*.

12. He supposes that we all aim to be happy. *What man is he that desireth life?*—that is (as it follows), not only to see many days, but to see good comfortable days. *It is not our being, but our well-being that is entitled to the name of life.* It is asked, “Who wishes to live a long and pleasant life?” And it is easily answered, *Who does not?* *H.*—Life with all its burdens and anxieties is yet such a blessed thing, this earth, with its ties and pursuits and objects and possessions, has so much in it to occupy and fascinate and gladden; friends are so kind, home is so happy, knowledge is so noble, nature is so fair, that, say as we will, think as we may that heaven is our home and this world a wilderness, were our health unbroken, and our tasks unfinished, and our energies fresh, and our homes full, we should follow with somewhat reluctant steps and moistened eyes, and a heart looking behind us, the messenger that takes us away. We are meant to love life; nay, we are made to love it. Love of life is no sin, it is merely a lower kind of love than a desire for the fruition of life eternal in the presence of the Lamb; and the Divine way of lifting us up from the lower level to the higher, without contradicting on the one hand God’s purposes for our earthly service, or, on the other hand, crushing the beautiful human affections, which are the features of God’s own image in ruined yet not quite defaced souls, is by gradually weaning us from earthly things, rather than by violently alienating us from them, by correcting and elevating, rather than by destroying our natural instincts and capacities, through the blessed prospect of the inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. If we wish for heaven only because we are tired of earth, we shall soon want to leave it, and be back here. Heavenly-mindedness, such as God would work in us, is a weariness of sin, not of duty; a desire to see God, not merely to leave men. *Bishop Thorold*.

The structure of a Christ-like character is the life-long work of a true disciple. Slowly, course by course, the stones have to be laid, each by a distinct effort, and all according to the plan of the great Architect, and on the foundation other than which no man can lay. That great ideal must be clear before the true disciple. Life is not for enjoyment nor for worldly ends, but for building up Christ-like character, and all outward things are but scaffolding to further the building. *A. M.*

13. *Keep thy tongue from evil and thy lips from speaking guile.* The man who was inquired for in v. 12 is here directly addressed. Whoever thou art, if thou desire thus to live, *keep, watch, guard, thy tongue from speaking evil*, a comprehensive phrase, for which the last clause substitutes one more specific—namely, *speaking guile*, uttering deceit, or lying. *A.*—The tongue is an instrument of much good or much evil. Life and death are in its power; he that keepeth it keepeth his soul; and he who offendeth not therewith is a perfect man; it is an unruly member, and the first work of the fear of God must be to bridle it, that no profane, unclean, slanderous, deceitful, or idle word proceed out of the mouth. And as the heart is to the tongue what the fountain is to the stream, that must first be purified. *Bishop Horne*.—The tongue is a great mischief-maker, and not easily ruled. The root of this ill-governed member is in the unseen world of the soul; the force which animates and moves the tongue is generated in our spiritual nature. When the spirit which excites and controls the tongue is not love to God and love to man, the speaker by his words sows a curse in his own constitution. It is one of the laws of thy health that thou “keep thy tongue from speaking evil.” **And thy lips from speaking guile.** The absence of guile exceedingly endears a man or a woman to heaven. No sin is imputed where there is no guile. Except ye become as guileless as babes, your friends in the kingdom of God will behold you afar off, as persons who are unable to come nigh. *J. Pulsford*.

Where there is no guile in the heart, there will be none in the lips. The two great means which insincerity uses in order to deceive are simulation and dissimulation; simulation is the seeming to be what we are not; dissimulation, the seeming not to be what we are. But the man of sincerity shuns them both. To say nothing at all is in many cases consistent with the highest sincerity, and so it is to speak with reserve to say only a part, perhaps a small part, of what we know; but were we to pretend it

to be the whole, this would be contrary to sincerity. Sincerity in speech includes fairness and honesty in controversy ; shunning a sophism, however tempting, if we know it to be such ; scorning to take an unfair advantage in argument, or trying to make "the worse appear the better reason." It is opposed to another dangerous practice, against which it is scarcely possible to inveigh too strongly—avowing and defending, for the sake of argument, opinions which we do not believe. *S. D. Waddy.*—It is the doctrine of the Scriptures and of the unsophisticated language of man's moral constitution, that truth is obligatory on its own account, and that he who undertakes to signify to another, no matter in what form, and no matter what may be the right in the case to know the truth, is bound to signify according to the convictions of his own mind ! He is not always bound to speak, but whenever he does speak he is solemnly bound to speak nothing but the truth. The universal application of this principle would be the diffusion of universal confidence. It would banish deceit and suspicion from the world, and restrict the use of signs to their legitimate offices. *Thornwell.*

In that one creature who was made in the image of God—into whom God breathed a living soul—there is speech, the open channel for its forthgoing. Reverence human speech. It is the mark of a being who has been made, and may be remade, a child of God. Reverence human speech, for it is a divinely formed capacity for a divinely prescribed use. Dread false speech, proud speech, impure speech, profane speech—for these are the bright weapons with which the King has accoutred us wielded against the King. High treason ! *Arnot.*

Depart from evil and do good ; seek peace and pursue it. If thou desire to enjoy life, *depart from evil*, break off the practice and abjure the love of it ; and since this is neither practicable nor sufficient as a mere negation, effect it by a positive performance of its opposite, *do good*. Compare the exhortation in Isa. 1 : 16, 17, *Cease to do evil, learn to do good.* *A.*

Depart from evil. This denotes that evil is near to men ; it keeps close to them, and should be declined and shunned ; and it regards all sorts of evil : evil men and their company ; evil things, evil words and works, and all appearance of evil ; and the fear of the Lord shows itself in a hatred of it and a departure from it. *John Gill.*—These precepts are the duty of works, and they are four where the precepts of words were but two ; because we

must be more in works than in words ; and they are all affirmative, for it is against the nature of a work to be in the negative ; for so working should be no better than idleness : the two former are general, as general as good and evil ; that if we meet with evil our part is to *depart*. *R. Baker.*

Do good. Good works are the mark, the proof, the evidence of Christian life ; they are the badge of a Christian community ; and they are the means through which the members of that community are bound together, and the Christian life is brought to pervade them all. When they are scanty, the Christian life must be feeble ; when they are totally wanting, whether in an individual or a community, the Christian life must be all but extinct. They are also the means of growing in the Christian life ; for it is by exercise, by action, that every living principle is strengthened. The Christian life is not created by our good works, but it is to be fostered and nourished by them, and may be so to a wonderful extent, if we always bear in mind how it originated, and are careful to have it replenish from its only source ; while, on the other hand, without them it will pine and die. Indeed in this instance we have the special assurance : "And to him who hath shall be given ; and from him who hath not shall be taken away even what he hath." *IIare.*

Our religion is neither a dogma nor a theory, a thesis nor a hypothesis, a category nor a dream. It is a spiritual power ; it is a personal presence ; it is a governing genius of life ; it is a comforter of actual sorrows ; it is a quickener to every noble work. It is the world's best builder, planter, legislator, and reformer. It is not a stranger to be scrutinized, but a friend to be loved, because it has first loved us. It is not a guest to be entertained, but a leader to be followed ; not a secret to be found out, for its very face is a revelation ; not a clever and promising applicant for a place, which thrift may turn to account and vanity display, for it speaks in the name of the Lord ; not an institution that can expire by limitation, nor a form that grows old, nor a ceremony that can give up the ghost and still keep on its feet, but an everlasting, living law, vital in every part ; not a policy that can be shaped, but a principle that by its own formation and irresistible spirit shapeth all things. It is a reality. *F. D. H.*

To "depart from evil" is but a part of our duty ; we are also to "do good." "Pure religion and undefiled" walks not in solitude ; her hands are employed providing the orphans bread ; her feet are found at the widow's door ;

her steps are even sometimes turned to haunts of vice ; her visits are paid, not so much to the great and noble as to the fatherless and widows in their affliction ; and, following our Lord, nor shrinking from the touch of guilt, she goes forth to seek and save the lost. *Guthrie.*—

All the good that is done among men is proportioned only and exactly to the amount of sacrifice which is employed to produce it. To witness sacrifice is of itself to breathe a bracing atmosphere. All labor is sacrifice. All that is most noble and most lasting, and that truly enriches and elevates the life of man, is only achieved by sacrifice—the sacrifice of inclinations, the sacrifice of time, of goods, of health, and, if need be, of life. H. P. L.

God blesses you that you may be a blessing to others. Then He blesses you also a second time in being a blessing to others. It is the talent that is used that multiplies. Receiving, unless one gives in turn, makes one full and proud and selfish. Give out the best of your life in the Master's name for the good of others. Lend a hand to every one who needs. Seek to be a blessing to every one who comes for but a moment under your influence. This is to be Christ-like. We are in this world to be useful. God wants to pass His gifts and blessings through us to others. Be content to pour your life into other lives, and see them blessed and made more beautiful, and then hide away and let Christ have the honor. Work for God's eye, and do not think much about reward. Seek to be a blessing, and never think of self advancement. We need to take care that no shadows of ourselves, of our pride, our ambition, our self-seeking, fall upon our work for Christ. J. R. M.

If ever we are to labor truly for the highest good of our fellow-creatures, we must learn to take reverent and loving views of them. The deeper and higher our estimate of the soul of man, the more shall we be filled with the pity and awe that are the strength of persevering labor in its behalf ; and the more shall we share the mind and help the work of Him who, knowing the soul's value, died for its eternal good. *Ker.*—Ever regard the great rule to distinguish between the error itself and the living man that holds the error ; or the vice, which by its nature is altogether evil, and the human heart of the human brother or sister which with its mixed ingredients is stained with the vice ; hating and condemning the vice, but loving its victim ; nay, hating the vice the more because it has made him its victim. You will say that, in practice, such discriminations are extremely difficult. That is true ; but they are none the

less, for that, our Christian business ; and no great services to Christ are very easy. Charity requires us further to remember that whatever evil our neighbors suffer themselves to do, we can never know how much they are tempted to do which they effectually restrain. There are terrible battles fought in all human breasts, out of human sight. Could we know all that is resisted and all that is overcome behind these erring lips and lives, we should often have to admire the virtue rather than to condemn the fault. F. D. H.

Seek peace. Peace is specially singled out from among the good ; we are not only not to disturb it, but to seek it ; yea, we are to pursue it as a hunter pursues the noblest beast of prey. Let us follow, says the apostle also (Rom. 14 : 19 ; Heb. 12 : 14), after that which makes for peace. D.—Because nothing is more contrary to that love which never fails, which is the summary both of law and Gospel, both of grace and glory, than strife and contention, which bring confusion and every evil work ; we must seek peace and pursue it ; we must show a peaceable disposition, study the things that make for peace, do nothing to break the peace, and to make mischief. If peace seem to flee from us, we must pursue it ; *follow peace with all men*, spare no pains, no expense, to preserve and recover peace, be willing to deny ourselves a great deal, both in honor and interest, for peace sake. These excellent directions in the way to life and good are transcribed into the New Testament, and made part of our Gospel duty (1 Pet. 3 : 10, 11). H.—Augustine says, Live righteously and live peaceably. Quietness shall find out righteousness wheresoever he lodgeth. But she abhorreth the house of evil. Peace will not dine where grace hath not first broken her fast. Let us embrace godliness, and “ the peace of God, that passeth all understanding, shall preserve our hearts and minds in Jesus Christ.” T. Adams.

15, 16. The same eye which beams in lambent love on “ the righteous” burns terribly to the evil-doer. “ The face of the Lord” means the side of the Divine nature which is turned to us, and is manifest by His self-revealing activity, so that the expression comes near in meaning to “ the way of the Lord,” and the thought in both cases is the same, that by the eternal law of His Being, God's actions must all be for the good and against the evil. A. M.—If life and peace and all good be in God's hand to bestow when it pleaseth Him, then, sure, the way to it is an obedient and regular walking in observance of His will ; and the way

of sin is the way to ruin. *For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His face is against them that do evil.* L.

15. His ears are open unto their cry. The word "open" is not in the original, but the meaning is that the ear of God is in a leaning kind of posture toward the cries of the righteous. Those who are worthy and righteous indeed, the ear of God leans and hangs toward them and their prayers, according to Cant. 2 : 14, "Let me hear Thy voice, for sweet is Thy voice." There is a kind of naturalness and pleasantness between the ear of God and the prayers, and petitions, and cries of such a righteous man. *John Goodwin.*

18. The fact that even good men fall into sin and that the best of them have the sins of their impenitent life to repent of, make a broken heart and a contrite spirit constituent elements of a pious man's character and standing conditions of God's favor. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at My word" (Isa. 66 : 2). No state of mind other than this or unlike this can be right in one who has ever sinned.

19. No human life escapes all suffering and trial ; let it suffice that the Lord knows how to deliver every righteous one from anything whatever—that is, on the whole, a real evil, for He can make every permitted trial or pain work out the richer results of moral discipline—submission, obedience, trust. C.

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous," and wherefore, but to bring his religious belief and emotions in close contact with the humiliations of animal life, and to necessitate the use of prayer as a real and efficient means of obtaining needful assistance in distress ? I. T.—Be our troubles many in number, strange in nature, heavy in measure ; yet God's mercies are more numerous, His wisdom more wondrous, His power more miraculous ; He will deliver us out of all. *T. Adams.*—The trial is father to the triumph, and the song owes its paternity to the sigh. He who loves and trusts God can count his distresses and his deliverances at the

same time, for the number of the one is the number of the other. *Anon.*

20. He stands under the most special providence : "He keepeth all his bones, not one of them is broken ;" a pictorial specialization of the thought that God does not suffer matters to come to extremities with the righteous, that He does not suffer him to be torn from His almighty protecting love. Still we cannot but think of the literal fulfilment which these words found in the crucified One ; for the Old Testament prophecy, which is quoted in John 19 : 33-37, may equally well be traced back to our Psalm as to Ex. 12 : 46. Not only the paschal lamb, but to a certain extent even every affliction of the righteous, is a type. In His case human suffering sounds the very lowest depths ; all the promises given to the righteous are also fulfilled in Him ; for He is the righteous One in the most absolute, the Holy One of God in the most unique sense (Isa. 53 : 11 ; Jer. 23 : 5 ; Zech. 9 : 9 ; Acts 3 : 14 ; 22 : 14). D.

21, 22. In each of these verses the verb rendered *condemned* means, primarily, *to be guilty* ; and secondarily, *to be punished* for this guilt. All they that hate the righteous are thus held guilty and punished ; but never those who reverently and humbly trust in Him. The ministrations of good or ill through God's providence will sever broadly between the righteous and the wicked. He will surely let the world know whom He approves and loves, on the one hand, and whom He cannot but abhor for their wickedness, on the other. C.

22. Those who put their trust in God are never put to shame. No doubt it often seems as if their hopes were all baffled. Certainly many things befall them which were not expected and not desired. But the Lord always helps in due time ; He always blesses, though it be in adversity and through adversity ; He always brings good out of the apparent evil. Therefore the Christian can confidently cast all his cares upon the Lord and commit himself to the Lord's loving providence. "The Lord redeemeth the soul of His servants." *Anon.*

PSALM XXXV.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

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| <p>1 STRIVE thou, O LORD, with them that strive
with me :
Fight thou against them that fight against me.</p> <p>2 Take hold of shield and buckler,
And stand up for mine help.</p> <p>3 Draw out also the spear, and stop the way
against them that pursue me :
Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.</p> <p>4 Let them be ashamed and brought to dishonour
that seek after my soul :
Let them be turned back and confounded
that devise my hurt.</p> <p>5 Let them be as chaff before the wind,
And the angel of the LORD driving <i>them</i> on.</p> <p>6 Let their way be dark and slippery,
And the angel of the LORD pursuing them.</p> <p>7 For without cause have they hid for me their
net <i>in</i> a pit,
Without cause have they digged <i>a pit</i> for
my soul.</p> <p>8 Let destruction come upon him at unawares ;
And let his net that he hath hid catch himself :
With destruction let him fall therein.</p> <p>9 And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD :
It shall rejoice in his salvation.</p> <p>10 All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like
unto thee,
Which deliverest the poor from him that is
too strong for him,
Yea, the poor and the needy from him that
spoileth him ?</p> <p>11 Unrighteous witnesses rise up ;
They ask me of things that I know not.</p> <p>12 They reward me evil for good,
<i>To</i> the bereaving of my soul.</p> <p>13 But as for me, when they were sick, my
clothing was sackcloth :
I afflicted my soul with fasting ;
And my prayer returned into mine own
bosom.</p> <p>14 I behaved myself as though it had been my
friend or my brother :
I bowed down mourning, as one that bewail-
eth his mother.</p> <p>15 But when I halted they rejoiced, and gath-
ered themselves together :</p> | <p>The abjects gathered themselves together
against me, and I knew <i>it</i> not ;
They did tear me, and ceased not :</p> <p>16 Like the profane mockers in feasts,
They gnashed upon me with their teeth.</p> <p>17 LORD, how long wilt thou look on ?
Rescue my soul from their destructions,
My darling from the lions.</p> <p>18 I will give thee thanks in the great congre-
gation :
I will praise thee among much people.</p> <p>19 Let not them that are mine enemies wrong-
fully rejoice over me :
Neither let them wink with the eye that
hate me without a cause.</p> <p>20 For they speak not peace :
But they devise deceitful words against
them that are quiet in the land.</p> <p>21 Yea, they opened their mouth wide against
me ;
They said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it.</p> <p>22 Thou hast seen it, O LORD ; keep not si-
lence :
O LORD, be not far from me.</p> <p>23 Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment,
<i>Even</i> unto my cause, my God and my LORD.</p> <p>24 Judge me, O LORD my God, according to
thy righteousness ;
And let them not rejoice over me.</p> <p>25 Let them not say in their heart, Aha, so
would we have it :
Let them not say, We have swallowed him
up.</p> <p>26 Let them be ashamed and confounded to-
gether that rejoice at mine hurt :
Let them be clothed with shame and dishonour
that magnify themselves against me.</p> <p>27 Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that
favour my righteous cause :
Yea, let them say continually, The LORD be
magnified,
Which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his
servant.</p> <p>28 And my tongue shall talk of thy righteous-
ness,
<i>And</i> of thy praise all the day long.</p> |
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WE have here another of those Psalms, in which two great parties, the righteous and the wicked, are exhibited in contrast and in an attitude of mutual hostility. The Psalm may be

divided into three parts, parallel to one another, in all of which the elements combined are complaint, prayer, and the promise of thanksgiving for anticipated deliverance. The first division is occupied with an invocation of Divine judgments on God's enemies, ending with an expression of triumph in God's favor (vs. 1-10). The second contains a more particular description of these enemies, as oppressors, false accusers, unthankful renderers of evil for good, and malignant scoffers, with a prayer for the Divine interposition, and a pledge of public thanksgiving (vs. 11-18). The third renews briefly the description of the enemy, but is chiefly filled with prayer to be delivered from them, and closes, like the others, with a promise of perpetual thanksgiving (vs. 19-28). A.

This Psalm is singularly animated; the transitions of thought and feeling are abrupt; prayer, imprecations, expostulations, complaints, and hopeful ejaculations succeed in rapid alternation; the images are vigorous and graphic, but not wrought out in detail; the position is not that of a king, but of a subject, harassed, poor, beset by enemies, liable to judicial persecution; there is no special consciousness of guilt, but perfect confidence in God's righteousness, and in His own; the language also is rugged, with many archaic forms and obscure idioms, the rhythm highly lyrical and full of movement. All these characteristics point to the time when David was pursued by Saul.

1. Plead my cause. David is wrongfully accused, and prays to God to be his advocate; but inasmuch as the cause is carried on not in a court of justice but in the battle-field, the advocate must be also a champion, and the images at once pass over into the sphere of warfare. As in all David's earlier poems, the representation of the Lord is what is called anthropomorphical; he realizes the manifestation vividly as that of "a man of war" (Ex. 15 : 3). *Cook.*

3. "I am." It is comfort to Israel in captivity that God says, I will redeem thee; but the assurance that quiets the conscience is this, "*I am thy salvation.*" Deferred hope faints the heart. Whatsoever God forbears to assure us of, oh, pray we Him not to delay this, "Lord, say to my soul, *I am your salvation.*" *T. Adams.*

4. Shameful disappointment shall be the portion of the enemies of the Gospel, nor would the most tender-hearted Christian have it otherwise; viewing sinners as men, we love them and seek their good, but regarding them as

enemies of God, we cannot think of them with anything but detestation, and a loyal desire for the confusion of their devices. No loyal subject can wish well to rebels. In their hearts all good men wish confusion to mischief-makers. S.

5, 6. The Psalmist represents his foes' discomfiture under two figures; the first taken from common experience, but with the introduction of a striking image, which raises it into the higher sphere of poetry. As they are scattered in a confused rout, utterly unresisting, like the light chaff in the windy winnowing field, the angel of the Lord, the defender of the pious, strikes (not *chases*) each in turn with His strong arm, and throws him down. They seek safety in flight, but the roads are dark and slippery; they stumble, are pursued, overtaken, and fall under the blows of the mighty Being whose wrath they have provoked. *Cook.*

5. *Let them be as chaff before a wind, and the angel of Jehovah smiting.* Under the influence of inspiration the Psalmist sees the natural and righteous consequences of their wickedness, and viewing the case merely in itself, apart from personal feeling, speaks of this effect as desirable. The Psalmist desires the destruction of these sinners precisely as God wills it; nor is it any harder to reconcile such wishes with the highest degree of human goodness than it is to reconcile the certain fact that God allows some men to perish with His infinite benevolence. A.

6. A terrible doom is this, driven back from their malicious assaults upon the good, along a way dark and intensely slippery (Hebrew, double slipperiness), and God's angel of retribution crowding hard upon their steps! Ought not every good man to rejoice that God rules with retributive justice over all evil-doers, and that He will take care of the interests of morally right-doing, sustaining them by a righteous administration of reward and punishment? To this extent reaches the spirit of David in the Psalm before us; no further. C.

10. He will praise God with the whole man, with all that is within him, and with all the strength and vigor of his soul, intimated by his bones, which are within the body, and are the strength of it. He will praise Him as one of peerless and unparalleled perfection; we cannot express how great and good God is, and therefore must praise Him by acknowledging Him to be a nonsuch. *Lord, who is like unto Thee?* No such Patron of oppressed innocence, no such Punisher of triumphant tyranny. The formation of our bones so wonderfully, so

curiously, the serviceableness of our bones, and the preservation of them, and especially the life which, at the resurrection, shall be breathed upon the dry bones, and make them flourish as an herb, oblige every bone in our bodies, if it could speak, to say, *Lord, who is like unto Thee?* and willingly to undergo any services or sufferings for Him. H.

13, 14. David paints his own feeling and bearing toward his persecutors in the strongest contrast with theirs toward him, and so far as the history throws light on the case, with entire truth. The last clause of v. 13 is precisely, My prayer shall (or let my prayer) return into mine own bosom; let the good I have sought for them, since they requite it only with hate and wrong, come back in blessings upon mine own soul. Observe the appropriate gradation from remoter friends to dearest, "friend," "brother," "mother." C.

13. "*My prayer returned into mine own bosom*; I had the comfort of having done my duty, and of having approved myself a loving neighbor, though I could not thereby win upon them, nor make them my friends." We shall not lose by the good offices we have done to any, how ungrateful soever they are, for our rejoicing will be this, *the testimony of our conscience*. H.—Prayer is never lost; if it bless not those for whom intercession is made, it shall bless the intercessors. Clouds do not always descend in showers upon the same spot from which the vapors ascended, but they come down somewhere; and even so do supplications in some place or other yield their showers of mercy. S.

If the bounties of heaven were given to man without prayer, they would be received without acknowledgment. Prayer, administering the perpetual lesson of humility, of hope, and of love, makes us feel our connection with heaven through every touch of our necessities; it binds us to Providence by a chain of daily benefits; it impresses the hearts of all with a perpetual remembrance of the God of all. *Croly*.

16. *Mockers at feasts, or feasting mockers.* Those that feasted men's ears at their meetings with speaking of the faults of others scoffingly, and therefore shared with them their feasts, as the word is; but to a renewed Christian mind that hath a new taste and all its senses new, there is nothing more unsavory than to hear the defaming of others, especially of such as profess religion. Did *the law of love* possess our hearts it would regulate our ear and tongue, and make them most tender of the name of our brethren; it would teach us the faculty of cov-

ering their infirmities and judging favorably; taking always the best side and most charitable sense of their actions; it would teach us to blunt the sharp edge of our censures upon ourselves, our own hard hearts and rebellious wills within, that they might remain no more sharp against others than is needful for their good. L.

18. "*I will praise Thee among much people.*" Most men publish their griefs, good men should proclaim their mercies. Praise—personal praise, public praise, perpetual praise—should be the daily revenue of the King of heaven. S.

19-23. David describes the great injustice, malice, and insolence of his persecutors, pleading this with God, as a reason why He should protect him from them, and appear against them. They were his enemies wrongfully, for he never gave them any provocation; *they hated him without a cause*; nay, for that for which they ought rather to have loved and honored him. This is quoted with application to Christ. H.

24. *Judge me according to Thy righteousness, Jehovah, my God, and let them not rejoice respecting me.* "Do me justice, clear me from aspersion, grant an attestation of my innocence, in the exercise and exhibition of thine own essential rectitude, and in accordance with that covenant relation which exists between us; and thus, in the most effectual manner, take away from my malignant enemies all pretext and occasion for exulting in my overthrow, or otherwise triumphing at my expense." With the last clause compare Psalm 30:1, where he thanks God for the very favor which he here asks. A.

28. *My tongue shall speak of Thy righteousness and of Thy praise all the day long.* Who endureth to praise God all the day long? I will suggest a remedy whereby thou mayest praise God all the day long if thou wilt. Whatever thou dost, do well, and thou hast praised God. When thou singest a hymn thou praisest God, but what doth thy tongue unless thy heart also praise Him? Do no wrong, and thou hast praised God. Raise not strife, and thou hast praised God. In the innocency of thy works prepare thyself to praise God all the day long. *Augustine*.

When David's whole career is intelligently and fairly reviewed, it leaves on the mind the impression of a man possessed of as meek and placable a temper as was ever associated with so great strength of will and such strong passions. Even in the heats of sudden resentment,

he was not apt to be hurried into deeds of revenge. Such being the case, it would certainly have been a strange and unaccountable thing if he had shown himself less the master of his own spirit in poems composed in seasons of retirement and communion with God, especially since these very poems express a keen sense of the heinousness of the sin that has been laid to his charge. He can affirm regarding his implacable enemies, "As for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother." "O Lord, my God, if I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands; if I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me (yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy): let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth" (Psalm 7: 3-5). Surely one ought to think twice before putting on the imprecations an interpretation which would make them utterly incongruous with these appeals, uttered almost in the same breath. *W. Binnie.*

It is inconceivable that in the moments of highest religious consecration in which he composed his Psalms, the unholy fire of personal passion should have mingled with the holy fire of his love to God. All the imprecations found in these Psalms flow from the pure spring of unselfish jealousy for God's honor. That this jealousy appears here as jealousy for his own person arises from the fact that David stands over against Saul, the king alienated from God,

as the divinely anointed heir of the kingdom, and that to his mind the cause of God, the continuance of the Church, and the future of Israel coincide with his own fortunes. The fire of his wrath is kindled at this focus of the view that he takes of himself in connection with the history of redemption. It is therefore holy fire. *D.*

When we remember his chivalrous abstinence once and again from slaying the guilty Saul, we must allow that, for his age and time, he was singularly free from vindictiveness. It is not likely that he should keep malice and anger hoarded up in his soul, and relieve himself of it in the moments when he held communion with his God; cursing, just as he saw by faith the battlements of the city of Eternal Peace. It is very remarkable that each of the Psalms in which the strongest imprecatory passages are found contains also gentle undertones, breathings of beneficent love. Thus, "When they were sick I humbled my soul with fasting; I behaved myself as though it had been my friend or brother." "They have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love" (109: 4). If the Psalms in question contain "wild imprecations," if a "vindictive spirit burns fiercely in them," we are *not* justified in styling *that* the "spirit of the elder dispensation." That spirit said, "Thou shalt *not* hate thy brother in thy heart; thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The best Jewish commentators understand neighbor to include both kinsmen and strangers, both Israelites and non-Israelites. That spirit said, "Rejoice not when thy enemy falls, and let not thy heart be glad when he stumbles." *Bishop Alexander.*

PSALM XXXVI.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN. A PSALM OF DAVID THE SERVANT OF THE LORD.

- 1 THE transgression of the wicked saith within my heart,
There is no fear of God before his eyes.
- 2 For he flattereth himself in his own eyes,
That his iniquity shall not be found out and
be hated.
- 3 The words of his mouth are iniquity and
deceit:
He hath left off to be wise *and* to do good.
- 4 He deviseth iniquity upon his bed;

He setteth himself in a way that is not good;
He abhorreth not evil.

- 5 Thy lovingkindness, O LORD, is in the
heavens;
Thy faithfulness *reacheth* unto the skies.
- 6 Thy righteousness is like the mountains of
God;
Thy judgments are a great deep.
O LORD, thou preservest man and beast.

7 How precious is thy lovingkindness, O God !

And the children of men take refuge under the shadow of thy wings.

8 They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house ;

And thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.

9 For with thee is the fountain of life :

In thy light shall we see light.

10 O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee ;

And thy righteousness to the upright in heart.

11 Let not the foot of pride come against me, And let not the hand of the wicked drive me away.

12 There are the workers of iniquity fallen : They are thrust down, and shall not be able to rise.

THIS Psalm is not so distinct in its features that we can assign it to any particular occasion in the life of David, or associate it with any definite period of Jewish history. It opens with a striking picture of what a wicked man is, who abandons himself, without check or remorse, to the inspirations of his own evil heart (vs. 1-4). Next, as if oppressed and terrified with the picture which he has drawn of secure and thoughtful wickedness, the Psalmist turns with a quick revulsion of feeling to Him whose love and truth are at all times a sure defence. Here he pours out all the fulness of his heart. Words seem to fail him as there rise before him, in all their length and breadth, the lovingkindness, the faithfulness, the righteousness of Jehovah (vs. 5-9). Lastly, with his heart full of what God is, he prays that God would show His lovingkindness and His righteousness to those who, like himself, were upright in heart, and would defeat the designs of the wicked. He concludes with the confident acknowledgment that his prayer has been heard (vs. 10-12). P.

Religion, for the Psalmists, is a present joy. The purest pleasure is in the exercise of the affections which have God for their object. The thirty-sixth Psalm may be taken as a specimen. Turning from the darkness of the unregenerate heart, David, the servant of the Lord, looks upon the objects which are most glorious and most beautiful in nature—the strong mountains, the great deep, the heavens—as shadows of God's beauty. He thinks of a joy as in the coolness and music of the river of God. God is at once a fountain and a light. There is neither thirst nor darkness for those who know Him. The reality of God and the soul is the conviction of the Psalmists. Psalm after Psalm is a monologue of the soul with God, or a dialogue between it and God. Bishop Ken's line,

“And thought to thought with Thee converse,”

is the very expression of the spirit of the Psalms. Yet they are filled with a joy which is at once

solemn and childlike. In spite of all their sighs and tears, for all their tender sympathy with the passion of Christ, and with the sorrows of His people, “the power of light lives inexhaustibly” in them. One only (the eighty-eighth) begins and ends with a sob. In all the rest joy sparkles, if not on the crest of every wave, yet along the line of every tide. *Bishop Alexander.*

1. *Thus saith depravity to the wicked (one) in the midst of my heart, there is no fear of God before his eyes.* This is one of the most difficult verses in the whole Book of Psalms. Amid various and doubtful explanations one thing is certain, that the wicked man is here described as one who fears not God, just as the fear of God is elsewhere put for godliness or piety. A.—All the critics feel the difficulties of this verse. The Hebrew word answering to “saith” is not a verb, but a noun, meaning properly *an oracle*—an utterance either from God Himself, or from one supposed to be under special inspiration. It is almost distinctively the word by which the prophetic declarations of God are indicated and is commonly translated, “Thus saith the Lord.” In accordance with this usage we have here the sentiment, *Depravity is the sinner's oracle.* Its impulses have to him an authority potent as the voice of God, or at least, as those oracular responses which are supposed to come from superhuman sources. C.—The Psalmist hears within his own heart the echo of the suggestions which sin whispers oracularly to the wicked ; this explains to him how it is that a man can sin so fearlessly : he who listens to it loses altogether the sense of God's presence and the fear of His judgments. *Cook.*

2. Here is one reason why he fears not God, but gives heed to the impulses of his depravity. He flatters himself—not “until,” but *in reference to* the finding out of his iniquity and the hating of it. Now since the fear of God is the thing denied of him the thought here must be that he flatters himself God will not find out his iniquity to hate and therefore punish it. Under the right construction, the verse gives

with surpassing accuracy the philosophy of sinning—viz., men flatter themselves that God will never search out, find, hate, and therefore punish their sin. C.—*He flattereth himself in his own eyes*; while he goes on in sin, he thinks he does wisely and well for himself, and either does not see, or will not own, the evil and danger of his wicked practices; he calls evil good, and good evil; his licentiousness he pretends to be but his just liberty; his fraud passes for his prudence and policy; and his persecuting he people of God, he suggests to himself is a piece of necessary justice. If his own conscience threaten him for what he does, he says, *God will not require it, I shall have peace though I go on*. Sinners are self-destroyers, by being self-flatterers; Satan could not deceive them if they did not deceive themselves. H.

5, 6. A burst of rapture; here is the voice of the true oracle; all the attributes of the Lord stand out at once before the eyes of God's servant, never more distinctly than when the workings of evil give intensity to his feelings. Cook.—Words seem to fail him when he would speak of the lovingkindness, the faithfulness, the righteousness of God. The universe itself is too little to set forth their greatness. P.—The beauty of this Psalm lies in this expressive contrast which places the glorious excellencies of Israel's God over against the ineffable wickedness and guilt of sinners, who throw a loose rein upon their depraved impulses. The sense is that God's mercy towers high, up to heaven; it is great and glorious, high as heaven, vast as the universe! So of God's "righteousness" and of His "judgments;" the strongest expressions are used to indicate their richness, depth, and unutterable glory. C.

6. *Thy righteousness (is) like the hills of the Almighty; Thy judgments (are) a great deep; man and beast Thou wilt save (oh), Jehovah!* Righteousness here means rectitude in its widest sense, including the veracity and faithfulness mentioned in the foregoing verse. It is here described as infinite, by a comparison with natural emblems of immensity. The first are *the mountains of God, or of the mighty (God)*, the Divine name here used being that which properly denotes omnipotence. The constant usage of the term as a Divine name seems decisive in favor of the sense, hills produced by the almighty power of God and therefore proving it. The *great deep*, the ocean. The idea conveyed is not so much that of depth and mystery as that of vastness and immensity. The comprehensiveness of God's protecting care is further indicated by the combination *man and*

beast (or brute). To *save* includes the acts of helping, protecting and providing. A.

Great mountains. Or, "mountains of God;" God's creation, on which He has stamped the impress of His own majesty and grandeur. Such epithets as these show how deeply the Hebrew felt the beauty and majesty of natural scenery; the mountains were to him an outward representation of the righteousness, deep rooted in the very essence of the Godhead, and towering over the earth in its manifestation. Cook.—God's righteousness, celebrated by David, is justice inflexible toward sin and mercy ineffable toward sinners (Rom. 3:24). In this verse the Psalmist presents the two truths together, the sin and the mercy. David away back there in the truth's twilight knew not how better to tell God's character than by taking earth's grandest objects—the massive peaks that keep guard from snowy Lebanon or, it may be, those grander masses of which David had heard from his Eastern vassals, the Himalayas—and making them God's emblem. A God that inflexibly visits sin, yet is merciful, may, like the great mountains, seem icy and cold. Justice is an icy and cold attribute, especially to the view of men who have reason to be afraid. Yet as the icy and cold glaciers send down perennial streams that make the earth full of gladness and rejoicing all the year, so the strict judgment of the Almighty is for the perennial blessing not of earth only, but of the universe of worlds. If there were not justice in God, and no punishment, no dreadful lasting penalty upon sinning intelligences, there would be no heaven, no pure river of water of life, no green fields beyond the flood, no resting-place from wickedness—there would be nothing in the whole wide universe save hell. H. M. McCracken.

God's righteousness is declared to be like the great mountains. Like them, it is durable. The mountains have been often employed as emblems of permanence and stability. Sometimes God compares Himself with the mountains, and then we read that "as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even forever." Sometimes He *contrasts* Himself with the mountains, and then we read that "the mountains may depart, and the hills be removed, but that His kindness shall not depart from His people." The permanence of God's righteousness follows of necessity from the inherent unchangeableness of God Himself. His righteousness is exposed to none of the circumstances or accidents which bring peril to the righteousness

of man. God's righteousness is like the great mountains in its mysteriousness. Indeed, it is not only His righteousness, it is Himself, in all the essentiality of His being and perfections, that is a mystery. Faith must come to the aid of reason when we contemplate the righteousness of God as it slowly but surely accomplishes its purposes in the government of the world. God's righteousness is like the great mountains because, like them, it has heights which it is dangerous to climb. We cannot comprehend the higher mysteries of the Gospel; and if we could, it is more than doubtful whether any corresponding benefit could be derived from them. Men can no more live on the high mountains of theology than they can on the high mountains of the earth. God's righteousness is like the great mountains because, like them, it is a bulwark and a defence to all who regard it with reverence and faith. While it has heights on which the presumptuous spectator is sure to be lost if he should attempt to climb them, these very heights, if he will remain in the position which God has assigned to him, will be his surest defence and guard. No truth furnishes a more solid basis for the soul than the righteousness of God as it is revealed in the Scriptures. *E. Mellor.*

Nothing is more clear to any really thoughtful person than that, until some high point is passed, God ought to be enveloped in greater mystery, and will be, the closer He is brought to the mind. Knowing nothing of Him, He is no mystery at all; knowing a little, He is mystery begun; knowing more, He is a great and manifold deep, not to be fathomed. We are, and ought to be, overwhelmed by His magnitudes, till we are able to mount higher summits of intelligence than now. *Bushnell.*

The conception of the Psalmist is truthful, beautiful, and impressive. God's judgments are the deep which we cannot explore, but from this deep rise mountains, and these mountains are the righteousness of God; as they gird around the waters, so does the righteousness of God embrace all His dealings. As we doubt not that their foundations are the same with their summits, so we cannot doubt that the righteousness of God is the same in what is dark as in what is clear. Nay, more than this, as the surface of the water often mirrors the tops of the surrounding mountains, so not infrequently can an attentive eye observe the image of God's righteousness upon the very front of His dispensations. Not without reason the Psalmist says, "Thy righteousness is like the great mountains," before he speaks of the great

deep of God's judgments; for it is only upon the ground which His righteousness puts under us that we can look calmly upon His judgments; only the intelligent and firm conviction of that righteousness which can balance and steady the mind amid His mysteries. As by the righteousness of God we mean that perfection by which He is holy and just in Himself, and observes the strictest rules of equity in His dealings with His creatures; to be convinced of His righteousness is to be satisfied that, whatever may be appearances, God is guided in His actions by the most unimpeachable principles, and has only to make known His reasons to secure the approval of all His intelligent creatures. We cannot be satisfied of God's righteousness, without being thoroughly persuaded that even when His dealings are the darkest, they need only to be seen in the light of His wisdom to commend themselves as the best that could be devised. Thus it was that the Psalmist fortified himself against the inscrutableness of the Divine judgments, by assuring himself of the Divine righteousness; and herein he teaches us a lesson we are very apt to overlook, but which our comfort requires us perfectly to learn. We cannot always walk in the light; sometimes God will throw darkness about us; prosperity cannot be our unfailing allotment; our life is a checkered scene, the bright spots of which are intermingled with shade. If we have our hours of ease, we must have hours of difficulty; if we have comforts, we must have trials likewise. At times we may feel that we are treading upon the solid earth, and again we are launched out upon the ocean of God's judgments. And nothing will give us light in darkness, or strength in weakness, or relief in perplexity; nothing will equip us for the hour of difficulty or trial but the conviction, intelligent and thorough, of this simple truth, God's "righteousness is like the great mountains." Fixed upon this ground, we should always be firm, calm, collected, never afraid of evil tidings, never dismayed by the Divine dealings, because we would be stable, trusting in God. *E. Mason.*

Thou preservest. One of the most touching characteristics of Hebrew poetry is the instantaneous transition from the contemplation of God's majesty and unapproachable essence to that of His providential care. Compare Psalms 104 and 145: 14-16; see also the last words in Jonah. *Cook.*

Thou preservest man and beast. He gave them being at first, and He is the fountain of their being at every subsequent moment;

and there is not in this wide creation the single living thing which is not perpetually drawing upon God; so literally dependent upon His care and bounty, that an instant's suspension of His providential arrangements would suffice to quench the vital principle. What a picture is opened before us by the simple fact that in every department God is momentarily engaged in ministering to the beings whom He has called into existence; studying in all His appointments and arrangements the good of His creatures, everywhere showing Himself attentive to the comforts and the wants of the meanest living things; and while ordering the course of nature and marshalling the ranks of cherubim and seraphim, He is yet bending down from His throne and applying as close a guardianship to the ephemera which floats in the breeze as though it were the only animated creature, the only one requiring His providential care! *E. Mason.*

5-7. The sublimity and superabundance of the Divine grace and faithfulness the poet sets forth figuratively after earthly analogies; they are revealed upon earth in an elevation that reaches the heavens, they transcend all human thought, desire and understanding. Of God's righteousness the poet says that it is like mountains of God, unchangeably stable, like the colossal primal mountains which prove God's greatness and glory; and of God's judgments, that they are incomprehensible and unsearchable, like the great, deep-waved ocean. Absorbed in this adorable depth, the singer exclaims, How precious is Thy grace, Elohim, *i.e.*, how valuable beyond all treasures and how dear to him that knows how to prize it! *D.*

We have, first, God in the boundlessness of His loving nature. The one pure light of the Divine nature is broken up in the prism of the Psalm into various rays, which theologians call, in their abstract way, Divine attributes. These are "mercy, faithfulness, righteousness." Then we have two sets of Divine acts: judgments and the preservation of man and beast; and finally we have again "lovingkindness," which means substantially this: active love communicating itself to creatures that are inferior, and that might have expected something else to befall them. This "quality of mercy" stands here at the beginning and the end. It is the final upshot of all revelation. Next to mercy comes faithfulness. God's faithfulness is, in its narrowest sense, His adherence to His promises. Not only His articulate promises, but His past actions bind Him. His words, His acts, His own nature bind God to bless and

help. His faithfulness is the expression of His unchangeableness. The next beam of the Divine brightness is righteousness. The notion of righteousness here is that God has a law for His being to which He conforms, and that whatsoever things are fair, and lovely, and good, and pure down here—these things are fair, and lovely, and good, and pure up there; that He is the archetype of all excellence, the ideal of all moral completeness; that we can know enough of Him to be sure that what we call right He loves, and what we call right He practises. God's judgments are the whole of the ways, the methods, of the Divine government. They are the expressions of His thoughts, and these thoughts are thoughts of good, and not of evil. Last, we have the picture of man sheltering beneath God's wings. God's lovingkindness, or mercy, is *precious*, for that is the true meaning of the word translated "excellent." We are rich when we have that for ours; we are poor without it. The last verse tells us how we can make God our own: "They put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings." God spreads the covert of His wing, strong and tender, beneath which we may all gather ourselves and nestle. And how can we do that? By the simple process of fleeing unto Him, as made known to us in Christ our Saviour, to hide ourselves there. *A. M.*

7-9. The expressions here which denote the abundance of Divine blessings upon the righteous man seem to be taken from the temple, from whence they were to issue. Under the covert of the temple, the wings of the cherubim, they were to be sheltered. The richness of the sacrifices, the streams of oil, wine, odors, etc., and the light of the golden candlestick, are all plainly referred to. *S. Burder.*

Thy wings. A common figure in the Psalms, taken more immediately from the wings of the cherubim overshadowing the mercy-seat which covered the ark; but more remotely from birds, which defend their young by overshadowing them with their wings. *Bishop Francis Hare.*—The wings of the mother-bird are the natural shelter for her young. So she draws the little ones close to her warm bosom and spreads over them her sheltering wings. Our Divine Lord reproduces this figure as to even the city of His murderers—"How often would I have gathered thy children as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings!" *C.*

We come out of nothingness into being, and find ourselves nestled upon the bosom of a mother whose love for us yearns for a stronger expression than she can bestow, and under the

protection of a father who would place his life between us and harm. It is thus that we come into the world. We shall go out of it alone. We shall try the realities of the unknown companionless. Human love can follow us to the brink, but no further. We shall part with those we love and trust—shall we meet with those we love and trust? or shall we be strangers, with none to know or recognize or care for us? Here we have shelter from the sun and from the cold and the storms—shall we have shelter there? Let us provide ourselves, under the shadow of the wings of Him who is the Almighty. Close to His warm, cherishing heart here, we shall be so forever. We can be cast upon no shore where He is not. No storm can fall and no wind can blow where that covert is not nigh. There is no realm where His friendship is not more cheering than all human friendships. In no part of the universe will we be away from the shelter of our home, nor away from the companionship and smile of our loving Father, and the cherishing love of our Elder Brother. Let us enter God's family, where we are more than welcome—where our entrance will give joy even to the angels. There we shall never be from home, never shelterless, never companionless. The clasping hands of the good-by here will only be released that the hands of the joyful welcome may be given. We shall take our hands from the clinging hold, reluctant to release us, only that we may lay them in the warm palm of the King. We shall be pressed to more than a mother's bosom. We shall have the strong arm of our heavenly Father between us and harm. Our infancy in the new life will be a conscious infancy, our safety a conscious safety. This is what Christ means in calling to us: "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." *Interior.*

8, 9. The shadow of God's wings is the protection of His love, which hides one from trial and persecution. To be thus hidden in God is the most ineffable blessedness; they satiate themselves, drink full draughts of the "fatness of Thy house." The house of God is His sanctuary and, in general, the sphere of His grace. The fulness of the gifts and blessings and refreshings wherewith God entertains His own is called Eden, a stream of delights, wherewith He refreshes and fructifies the soul, a stream of paradisiacal delights. As the four arms of the river of Paradise had one common source, so this has its source in God; yea, God Himself is this source. All life streams forth from Him, the absolutely self-existent and blessed One;

the more intimately, therefore, men are connected with Him, in so much the fuller draughts do they drink life from the primal fountain of life. And just as God is the fountain of life, so is He also the fountain of light; apart from God seeing we see only darkness; whereas, absorbed in the ocean of God's light, we are enlightened by Divine knowledge and illuminated by spiritual joy. **D.**

9. *For with Thee is a fountain of life; in Thy light shall we see light.* They shall derive all this from Thee, because in Thee alone is the exhaustless source of all these blessings. *With Thee*, in Thy presence, in union and communion with Thee. The well-spring, fountain-head, or source of life, a summary expression for all enjoyments and advantages. The same idea is then clothed in another figurative dress. *In Thy light we shall see light.* It is only by the light of God's countenance that man can see any good. It is only in God's favor that he can be happy. The only bliss attainable or desirable is that which is bestowed by God, and resides in Him. **A.**—These are some of the most wonderful words in the Old Testament. Their fulness of meaning no commentary can ever exhaust. They are, in fact, the kernel and the anticipation of much of the profoundest teaching of John. **P.**

In Thy light. John found here the central truth of his doctrinal system (see 1: 4). The true light can only be discerned by those who live in it. The believing soul lives in an element of light, which at once quickens and satisfies the spiritual faculty, whereby heaven and heavenly things are realized. *Cook.*—Turn thou to the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. In that alone is life, and the Life is the light of men. What, then, but *apparitions* can remain to a philosophy which strikes death through all things visible and invisible; satisfies itself then only, when it can explain those abstractions of the outward senses (which by an unconscious irony it names indifferently facts and phenomena) *mechanically*—that is, by the laws of death; and brand with the name of mysticism every solution grounded in life, or the powers and intuitions of life? *Coleridge.*

In Thy light shall we see light. A person whose life is hid with Christ in God sees all things as God sees them, praises God's Word in every part, in every shade, turn, and application of it; sees and rejoices in God's will in His Word, beholds His attributes, bright, lovely, and glorious in all His testimonies, and esteems all His precepts concerning all things to be

right. All the aspects of God's Word are light and loveliness to such a soul. And all the precious influences of God's Word have their full and blessed effect upon such a soul. It grows in grace, in the symmetry and beauty of grace; every faculty of the soul, every power of the mind, as well as the feelings of the heart, grow in the presence of Christ, beneath His eye, His light, His care. G. B. C.

The light and the soul which receives will act and react. The light beheld transforms. The soul transformed is capable of more light. That again flows in, and purifies and beautifies. Thus, in continuous reciprocal energy, the endless process of learning to know an infinite Saviour, and becoming like a perfect Lord, goes on with constant approximation, and yet with somewhat ever undisclosed. The gift is not once for all, but is continuous through eternity. We shall become like Christ by knowing Him. We shall know Him by getting like Him. A. M.

Every part of life cannot but have a connection with that unseen world by which we are surrounded. To realize this connection is faith; to seek fellowship with its King through Christ is prayer. And just so far as we limit our purposes and desires by the visible and the temporal, we miss our true aim, we sin. Just so far as we claim no heavenly guidance and support, the clearest sight of the beauty of the eternal order is simply a vision of condemnation. And if this be so; or rather since this is so, while that heavenly light can stream over the occupations of our daily business; while that heavenly communion can be made vital by lifting the soul upward in the momentary acknowledgment of God's presence, shall we not be satisfied to do calmly and for eternity that which we find prepared for us, knowing that all so done must work its proper work, unflattered by success and undisturbed by failure? *Bishop Westcott.*

God gives truth—revealed truth—to man. He gives also this great privilege of prayer—access to Himself—to ask the meaning of the thing revealed. The Bible abounds in promises, the most direct and specific, to give light and wisdom, and holy guidance and Holy Spirit, to them that ask Him. So that one who comes to God in prayer for intellectual and moral light, prayer that is earnest and continuous, will have the light he seeks as certainly as the man who, at midnight, turns his face eastward and travels to meet the rising of the sun. *Raleigh.*—This is specially true in sickness and sorrow. God loves to show what His light is by making it burn where all around is very dark.

Watch; if you can only see it, there is already a line upon the cloud. The day-star is risen, and soon it will all come in its own order—a twilight, a breaking, a fleeing away of the shadows, a mounting of the sun in your heart higher and higher, a cheering warmth, a meridian splendor. J. V.—By the fact then that we have the Light, by the fact that we are the children of the Light, by the glorious fact that we who were sometime darkness are now in the light, by the fact that the light is given us not to gratify our curiosity but to live in, by the other fact that it will grow dim if we fail to walk in it, and will brighten more and more unto the perfect day if we do walk in it, let us walk in the Light. The Father of Lights from His Throne bids us so to walk. It will be a walk of peace and an end of glory. *J. Drummond.*

Adoration is the gate of knowledge. When this gate of the soul is fully opened, in our deliverance from all impurity, what a revelation of knowledge must follow! Our adoring nature, transparent to God as a window to the sun, is filled with His eternal light. Every object of knowledge shines with inconceivable beauty. The resurrection morning is a true sun-rising, the inbursting of a cloudless day on all the righteous dead. They wake, transfigured, at their Master's call, with the fashion of their countenance altered and shining like His own. *Bushnell.*—Heaven is the world of light. More clearly, more comprehensively, than we now see the first principles of knowledge, we shall then perceive all those miracles and mysteries of the Divine dispensations, in nature, providence, and grace, of which we now hear or speak so much, and understand so little; in reference to which we now think as children; but then, from this infantine state, we shall rise to adult maturity of mind. Man is formed to expatiate and luxuriate in varied knowledge; what a feast of knowledge, ennobled by devotion, will be spread in heaven for the intellect, proportionately expanded to receive it! *R. Hall.*

12. The emphatic form of the word *there* is well put by Dr. Alexander: "*There* has very much the same sense as in common parlance when uttered as a sudden exclamation: *There!* they have fallen (already)!" At the moment of his prayer, a sense of assured confidence comes over his soul; he sees his prayer answered; his enemies already prostrate and his fears vanished away! C.

In vs. 8 and 9 we have a wonderful picture

of the blessedness of the godly, the elements of which consist in four things : satisfaction, represented under the emblem of a feast ; joy, represented under the imagery of full draughts from a flowing river of delight ; life, pouring from God as a fountain ; light, streaming from Him as a source. First, "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house." There is an allusion to the festal meal of priests and worshippers in the Temple on the occasion of the peace-offering ; and there is also the simpler metaphor of God as the Host at His table, at which we are guests. The plain teaching of the text is that by the might of a calm trust in God the whole mass of a man's desires are filled and satisfied. God, and God alone, is the food of the heart. God, and God alone, will satisfy your need. The next element of blessedness here : "Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures." The teaching is that the simple act of trusting beneath the shadow of God's wings brings to us an ever-fresh and flowing river of gladness, of which we may drink. All real and profound possession of, and communion with, God in Christ will make us glad—glad with a gladness altogether unlike that of the world round about us, far deeper, far quieter, far nobler, the sister and ally of all great things, of all pure life, of all generous and lofty thought. The third element of the blessedness of the godly is represented under the metaphor of life, pouring from the fountain, which is God. The words are true in regard of the lowest meaning of life, "physical existence ;" and they give a wonderful idea of the connection between God and all living creatures. Wherever there is life, there is God. The creature is bound to the Creator by a mystic bond and tie of kinship, by the fact of life. But the text refers to something higher than that, to that life of the spirit in communion with God

which is the true and proper sense of life, the one in which the word is almost always used in the Bible. As a fourth element of blessedness, "In Thy light shall we see light." The reference is to the spiritual gift which belongs to the men who "put their trust beneath the shadow of Thy wings." In communion with Him who is the Light as well as the Life of men, we see a whole universe of glories, realities, and brightnesses. In communion with God, we see light upon all the paths of duty. In the same communion with God, we get light in all seasons of darkness and sorrow. "To the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." A. M.

The moving pillar lights up the way for him *who follows it*. Life is a forced march through the desert, and has its hours of mingled necessity and fear, when natural light fails us at every step, when the gathering veils of uncertainty obscure the path more and more till it becomes impenetrable, yet when we know we must go on. We cannot encamp at twilight and wait till dawn. This is not our rest. Go on we must. Yet how to go, when all is dark before ; when the experience is unique and the path is untrodden ! It is then the pillar of light begins to shine, and slowly to move onward ; it is then the opalescent glory begins to pour into the night, lighting the way. Onward moves the pillar, but only he who *follows* is saved from the darkness. There is a way out of every wilderness, and there is a pillar of light to show the way out. But the condition of guidance is to *keep in the presence of Christ*. And to keep in the light is to keep moving, for the light moves. "He that *followeth Me* shall not walk in darkness." To cease from following is to be left in the dark. "For with Thee is the fountain of life ; in Thy light shall we see light." C. C. Hall.

PSALM XXXVII.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

- 1 FRET not thyself because of evil-doers,
Neither be thou envious against them that
work unrighteousness.
- 2 For they shall soon be cut down like the
grass,
And wither as the green herb.
- 3 Trust in the LORD, and do good ;

- [*So shalt thou*] Dwell in the land, and follow after [or, *feed on his*] faithfulness.
- 4 Delight thyself also in the LORD ;
And he shall give thee the desires of thine
heart.
 - 5 Commit thy way unto the LORD [Hebrew,
roll thy way upon the LORD] ;

- Trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass.
- 6 And he shall make thy righteousness to go forth as the light,
And thy judgment as the noonday.
- 7 Rest in the LORD [or, *be silent to the LORD*],
and wait patiently for him :
Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way,
Because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.
- 8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath :
Fret not thyself, *it tendeth* only to evil-doing.
- 9 For evil-doers shall be cut off :
But those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the land.
- 10 For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be :
Yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and he shall not be.
- 11 But the meek shall inherit the land ;
And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.
- 12 The wicked plotteth against the just,
And gnasheth upon him with his teeth.
- 13 The LORD shall laugh at him :
For he seeth that his day is coming.
- 14 The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow ;
To cast down the poor and needy,
To slay such as be upright in the way :
- 15 Their sword shall enter into their own heart,
And their bows shall be broken.
- 16 Better is a little that the righteous hath
Than the abundance of many wicked.
- 17 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken :
But the LORD upholdeth the righteous.
- 18 The LORD knoweth the days of the perfect :
And their inheritance shall be for ever.
- 19 They shall not be ashamed in the time of evil :
And in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.
- 20 But the wicked shall perish,
And the enemies of the LORD shall be as the excellency of the pastures :
They shall consume ; in smoke shall they consume away.
- 21 The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again :
But the righteous dealeth graciously, and giveth.
- 22 For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the land ;
And they that be cursed of him shall be cut off.
- 23 A man's goings are established of [or, *the steps of a good man are ordered by*] the LORD ;
And he delighteth in his way.
- 24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down :
For the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.
- 25 I have been young, and now am old ;
Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken,
Nor his seed begging *their* bread.
- 26 All the day long he dealeth graciously, and lendeth ;
And his seed is blessed.
- 27 Depart from evil, and do good :
And dwell for evermore.
- 28 For the LORD loveth judgment,
And forsaketh not his saints ;
They are preserved for ever :
But the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.
- 29 The righteous shall inherit the land,
And dwell therein for ever.
- 30 The mouth of the righteous talketh of wisdom,
And his tongue speaketh judgment.
- 31 The law of his God is in his heart ;
None of his steps shall slide.
- 32 The wicked watcheth the righteous,
And seeketh to slay him.
- 33 The LORD will not leave him in his hand,
Nor condemn him when he is judged.
- 34 Wait on the LORD, and keep his way,
And he shall exalt thee to inherit the land :
When the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.
- 35 I have seen the wicked in great power,
And spreading himself like a green tree in its native soil.
- 36 But one passed by [or, *yet he passed away*],
and, lo, he was not :
Yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.
- 37 Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright :
For the latter end of *that* man is peace.
- 38 As for transgressors, they shall be destroyed together :
The latter end of the wicked shall be cut off.
- 39 But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD :
He is their strong hold in the time of trouble.
- 40 And the LORD helpeth them, and rescueth them :
He rescueth them from the wicked, and saveth them,
Because they have taken refuge in him.

A PSALM wherein the righteousness of God's providence is vindicated in His administration of the world. The Psalmist's own heart had no doubt at one time been shaken by the apparent successes and triumphs of the ungodly, for it is a common temptation to distrust God when we see "the ungodly in great prosperity." The advice which the Psalmist gives is "to wait." "to trust in the Lord," to look at the end, and to observe how even in this life God manifests His righteousness, in rewarding the godly and punishing the wicked. This sentiment is repeated in various forms, and with much beauty of expression. The Psalm has something of a proverbial character about it, owing in some measure to the fact that this is one of the alphabetical Psalms, like Psalms 25 and 34. The structure of the Psalm is exceedingly regular. With few exceptions, the separate portions, as marked by the letters of the alphabet, consist of four members. P.

The fundamental thought which runs through the whole Psalm is expressed in the opening verses: take no offence at the prosperity of the godless, but wait on the Lord; for the prosperity of the godless comes suddenly to an end, and the final issue separates the righteous and the unrighteous. For this reason Tertullian calls this Psalm *providentiæ speculum*; Isidore, *potio contra murmur*; Luther, *vestis piorum, cui adscriptum: Hic sanctorum patientia est*. The poet develops that fundamental thought in short proverbial sayings, not without repetitions, in order to impress it more and more convincingly and deeply upon the mind of his readers. D.

1. Fret not thyself. The exhortation proves the depth and extent of this natural feeling. The expression in the original is very forcible: do not work thyself into heat; look coolly upon the facts; the heat will otherwise take the form of envy, the most perilous of all temptations. Cook.—"Fret not" is the keynote of the Psalm, for with that exhortation he begins. And no less than three times within the compass of eight verses does he repeat that clause: "Fret not thyself, fret not thyself, fret not thyself." The verb literally means to kindle a fire. You know that friction will produce a spark, which, falling upon combustible materials, will create a flame, and the flame may spread into a destructive conflagration. That is the figure; do not suffer a fire to be kindled in your spirit. How is it kindled? When we resist the pressure of our environment in such wise as that an excessive friction is the result, and as the outcome of that excessive friction

against our environment, against the order under which we find ourselves living, by which we find ourselves checked, resentment takes possession of us. Irritation of spirit destroys the calm and quiet of our thought and of our hearts. Anger has just the same effect upon the soul that fire has upon a building. The tongues of flame when they have free course will melt the granite and cause the entire structure to tumble into a mass of ruins and of ashes. Now the pressure is something that you and I cannot eliminate from our lives. We feel the burden of the yoke. We cannot repress the tears; we cannot avoid the pain; we cannot condone the wrong. But we can check the rising spirit of resentment, and we are never to forget that the first grace into which we are deliberately and continuously to school ourselves is the possession and the retention of a quiet mind. "Fret not thyself." Behrends.

While we fret and repine at God's will, do we not say in effect that it is better for us to have our own?—that is, in other words, that we are wiser than God, and could contrive things much more to our own advantage, if we had the disposal of them. This indeed no man utters in words; but whosoever refuses to submit himself to the hand of God speaks them aloud by his behavior. God, perhaps, is pleased to visit us with some heavy affliction, and shall we now, out of a due reverence of His all-governing wisdom, patiently endure it? or out of a blind presumption of our own, endeavor by some sinister way or other to rid ourselves from it? Passengers in a ship always submit to their pilot's discretion, but especially in a storm; and shall we, whose passage lies through a greater and more dangerous deep, pay a less deference to that great pilot, who not only understands, but also commands the seas? South.

Never complain of your birth, your training, your employments, your hardships; never fancy that you could be something if only you had a different lot and sphere assigned you. God understands His own plan, and He knows what you want a great deal better than you do. The very things that you most deprecate, as fatal limitations or obstructions, are probably what you most want. What you call hindrances, obstacles, discouragements, are probably God's opportunities; and it is nothing new that the patient should dislike his medicines, or any certain proof that they are poisons. No! a truce to all such impatience! Choke that devilish envy which gnaws at your heart, because you are not in the same lot with others; bring down your soul, or, rather, bring it up to

receive God's will and do His work, in your lot, in your sphere, under your cloud of obscurity, against your temptations; and then you shall find that your condition is never opposed to your good, but really consistent with it. Hence it was that an apostle required his converts to abide each one in that calling wherein he was called; to fill his place till he opens a way, by filling it, to some other; the bondman to fill his house of bondage with love and duty, the laborer to labor, the woman to be a woman, the men to show themselves men—all to acknowledge God's hand in their lot, and seek to co-operate with that good design which He most assuredly cherishes for them. H. B.

2. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass. Though they seem to be in a very prosperous condition for the present—as grass, while it is standing, is very green—yet they are soon cut down by the scythe of Providence, then presently fade, and are carried away from the place where they grew. You think Providence does not deal righteously because the unworthy are exalted and the worthy depressed. Do but tarry awhile, and you will have no cause to complain, or to grow weary of godliness, or to cry up a confederacy with evil men; they are nearer their ruin when they come to the height of their exaltation. *Manton.*

3. Trust. In the Greek word which we render by *faith*, the leading idea is that of confidence, of reliance, of trust. Only in a secondary sense does it come to be used for intellectual belief. The same is the case with the Hebrew word answering to that which in the New Testament we render by *faith*, and by the corresponding verb, *to believe*. This explains the absence of the word *faith* from the Old Testament. The idea is there and of perpetual occurrence, but is expressed by the word *trust*. *J. C. Hare.*

Trust in the Lord. Faith cures fretting. Sight views things only as they seem, hence her envy; faith has clearer optics to behold things as they really are, hence her peace. “*And do good.*” True faith is actively obedient. Doing good is a fine remedy for fretting. There is a joy in holy activity which drives away discontent. S.

There is something very significant in the order of thought. It is, “Trust in the Lord, and do good,” not, Do good, and trust in the Lord. The Psalmist had his eye on the living root out of which all living goodness springs. Good deeds will have a living greenness and a boundless fertility when the root out of which they spring is planted by the river of the grace

and the love of God. Let a man live out fearlessly the Divine rule, and daily his life will grow richer in love, in honor, and in the supply of all his needs. *Baldwin Brown.*

We must not think to trust God, and then live as we list. It is not trusting, but tempting Him, if we do not make conscience of our duty to Him. Nor must we think to do good and then trust to ourselves, and to our own righteousness and strength. We must trust in the Lord and do good. *Anon.*

Faith is a lively, busy, active thing! It is impossible for it not to be ceaselessly working good. Whoso doeth not such works is an unbelieving man. The assurance and knowledge of Divine grace render men glad, daring, merry before God and all creatures, which is the work of the Holy Ghost in faith. It is as impossible to separate works from faith as to separate burning and shining from fire. *Luther.*—Faith is the source; charity—that is, the whole Christian life, is the stream from it. It is quite childish to talk of faith being imperfect without charity; as wisely might you say that a fire, however bright and strong, was imperfect without heat; or that the sun, however cloudless, is imperfect without beams. The true answer would be, it is not faith, but utter reprobate faithlessness. *Coleridge.*

The only cure for indolence is work; the only cure for selfishness is sacrifice: the only cure for unbelief is to shake off the ague of doubt by *doing* Christ's bidding; the only cure for timidity is to plunge into some dreaded duty before the chill comes on. *Rutherford.*—Assurance and comforts are desirable, but fruitfulness is absolutely necessary. If we do not diligently and faithfully mind our duty in the latitude of it, and apply not ourselves wholly to the work the Lord has set us to do, we shall be found unfruitful. And then what place, what ground will there be for comfort or assurance? What claim can we lay to the privileges we are so much taken with? The end why the Lord offers us comfort and assurance of His love is to make us cheerful in His service, and to encourage us in His work, and engage our hearts in it thoroughly. *Clarkson.*

There may be a clear enough intellectual faith in the Gospel—a faith liberated from all speculative doubts, and some experience of its preciousness hardly less than joyful—at least for a while, *without* any corresponding manifestations of these things in practical Christian work and visible life. If there be one point in human experience more dangerous than an-

other, it is exactly the point between faith and practice, between inward love and outward work. Are there not many intelligent Christian people who *do* very little visibly and expressly for Christ? Is there not a great deal of hidden silent love in Christian hearts, burning like lamps in inner rooms and dark places, which, if brought out, would shed around some cherishing warmth, and some genial glow and brightness? We cannot hold life healthily thus. It is a question whether we can be sure of holding it at all for long. *Raleigh.*

Praying and working are, to the true servant of God, different manifestations of the same spirit-life. The Christian worker prays, not so much because he deems prayer necessary, as because the prayer is an essential part of his working. And he who truly prays works toward the end for which he prays, because his working is an essential element of his praying. In short, to the Christian that which is worth praying for is worth working for, and that which is worth working for is worth praying for. H. C. T.—No aim should be put higher in our life plans than that of personal helpfulness. The motto of the true Christian cannot be other than that of the Master's helpfulness: "Not to be ministered unto, but to minister." Even in the ambition to gather and retain wealth, the spirit of the desire must be, if we are Christians at all, that thereby we may become more helpful to others; that through, or by means of, our wealth, we may be enabled to do larger and greater good. Whatever gift, power, or possession we have that we do not seek to use in this way, is not yet truly devoted to God. Fruit is the test of character; and the purpose of fruit is not to adorn the tree or vine, but to feed hunger. Whatever we are, whatever we have, is fruit, and must be held for the feeding of the hunger of others. Thus personal helpfulness is the aim of all truly consecrated life. J. R. M.

The right faith of man is not intended to give him repose, but to enable him to do his work. It is not intended that he should look away from the place he lives in now, and cheer himself with thoughts of the place he is to live in next; but that he should look stoutly into this world, in faith that if he does his work thoroughly here some good to others or himself (with which, however, he is not at present concerned) will come of it hereafter. And this kind of brave, if not very hopeful faith is always rewarded by clear practical success and splendid intellectual power; while the faith which dwells on the future fades away into

rosy mist, and emptiness of musical air. *Ruskin.*

The Christian will pause from time to time to satisfy himself that he does, by God's grace, work in the spirit and by the help of his faith. It is always easy to find excuses for good undone and evil done; but each excuse accepted removes our faith farther away from the sphere of life and weakens the motives by which it prompts us to action. Some men who have been and are most active in reforming our criminals, in elevating our poor, in purifying the methods of government, in ennobling the aims of national policy, are without the all-constraining belief in the Gospel which we hold. We ought to be stronger and more active than they. If we are not our Christianity must be passing into a form. We find in every record of self-sacrifice an imperious call to us as Christians to test the reality of our belief. In every golden deed by which God reveals the possible nobility of man we hear His clear command, *Go and do thou likewise. Go and do thou likewise*; faith in Christ furnishes thee with a motive of irresistible force; faith in Christ furnishes thee with an instrument of inexhaustible strength. *Bishop Westcott.*

Contemplate this Christian paradox: When most active, most dependent. When most sensible of weakness, then most abundant in labor. When stretching every power to honor Christ, then sinking most deeply into the lowliness of self-distrust, and rising most triumphantly in trust upon the Lord. Let us pray for large measures of this grace of dependence on Christ; let us seek it by laboring for Christ. J. W. A.

Work for God, work for man, work that is twice blessed, which blesseth Him that gives and him that takes, is the correspondent condition of a vigorous, glowing health in the spiritual sphere. Let loose the wings of your loving ministry; stir your soul to some work which shall scatter blessings. If you would taste joy, fresh and pure from its fountain, do good, be ready to communicate. It is this which makes the soul instinct with vigor, aglow with health, and radiant with joy. Man is a crippled, half-developed being until his unselfish ministry is drawn forth. When he has tasted the joy of doing good, he is like the lame after Peter's touch, he goes out into the great temple of life, walking and leaping, and praising God. Try it. If life is sad, make it glad by service, service that strains your power, that a higher power only can make you strong enough to render. But here we touch the deep.

perennial fountain of gladness—the joy of the Holy Ghost. These men believed that they were imitating the Highest, that God's blessing was lying warm and cherishing on their lives. No wonder they were glad. The joy of a man who believes that God is with him is exuberant, irrepressible. The delight of doing the will of God, to those who have tasted it, masters all other joy. "My meat and my drink is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." *London Congregationalist*.

Come out of your secret chambers ; you may go there, and shut your door, only to pray and commune with Him, for refreshment, after and before your busy work in the world. Frames of feeling are no tests of your progress. An honest, healthy, robust, out-of-door faith is what you want. Plain duties, homely piety, cheerful submission, regular worship—Christ is waiting for you in all of these. In the morning, take up the morning's cross. Walk with Christ all day. Working under Him is watching for Him. And then, whether He shall come at the first watch, or in the second, or at noon-day, or at evening, blessed is the servant whom He shall find so watching ! F. D. H.

4. *And delight thyself in Jehovah, and He will give thee the requests of thy heart.* Here, too, the command implies a promise, which is afterward expressed. *Delight thyself*, seek and find thy happiness *in Jehovah*, literally, *upon Him*, the form of expression suggesting the idea of dependence and reliance, as well as that of union and communion. *Requests*, not mere *desires*, but *askings*, prayers. A.

Delight thyself. A very forcible word, which, however, inadequately expresses the feeling of blessedness and rapture in the original. The true counterpoise to envy of the temporal prosperity of the wicked is the inward intensity of joy in communion with God. *Cook*.—This living sense of God's presence with us is a leading feature of the character of all His saints under every dispensation. This is the purpose of all God's dealings with every child of Adam—to reveal Himself to them and in them. He kindles desires after Himself ; He helps and strengthens the wayward will ; He broods with a loving energy over the soul ; He will save us if we will be saved. All God's saints learn how near He is to them, and they rejoice to learn it. They learn to *delight* themselves in the Lord—He gives them their hearts' desire. *S. Wilberforce*.

Here is *the secret of tranquillity in freedom from eager, earthly desires*—"Delight thyself in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of

thine heart." The great reason why life is troubled and restless lies not without, but within. It is not our changing circumstances, but our unregulated desires, that rob us of peace. By our eager desires we give perishable things supreme power over us. Therefore we are ever disturbed by apprehensions and shaken by fears. And he who desires fleeting joys is sure to be restless always, and to be disappointed at the last. Disappointment is the law for all earthly desires ; for appetite increases with indulgence, and as it increases, satisfaction decreases. If, then, our desires are, in their very exercise, a disturbance, and in their very fruition prophesy disappointment, what shall we do for rest ? There is but one answer—"Delight thyself in the Lord." These eager desires, transfer them to Him ; and the soul, freed from the distraction of various desires by one masterful attraction, will be at rest. Such a soul is still, as the great river above the falls, where all the side currents and dimpling eddies and backwaters are effaced by the attraction that draws every drop in one direction. And then again, desire and fruition go together, and so there will be peace. "He will give thee the desires of thine heart ;" not perhaps at all times the identical blessings we wish, but something larger, deeper, for God Himself is the heart's desire of those who delight in Him, and to delight in Him is to possess our delight, and further desire after God will bring peace by putting all other desires in their right place. The more we have our affections set on God, the more we enjoy, because we subordinate His gifts. The less, too, shall we dread this loss, the less be at the mercy of their fluctuations. If you have God for your "enduring substance," you can face all varieties of condition, and be calm, saying,

"Give what Thou canst, without Thee I am poor,
And with Thee rich, take what Thou wilt away."

A. M.

5. *Roll upon Jehovah thy way, and trust upon Him, and He will do (it).* This last expression shows that the *way* is something to be done, and accordingly we find in Prov. 16 : 3 the explanatory variation, *roll to (or on) the Lord thy works, i.e.,* what thou hast to do but canst not do it, metaphorically represented as a burden too heavy for the person bearing it, and therefore rolled upon the shoulders of another. A.—Roll the sorrowful burden of thy way in life upon Jehovah, commit the guiding of thy life entirely to Him, and He shall nobly carry out everything that concerns thee. D.

The same word occurs in the same sense in

Psalm 22 : 8, said there of the Messiah : He *rolled Himself* upon the Lord to be delivered, Also, Prov. 16 : 3 : “Roll thy work upon the Lord”—for the help you need to do it both easily and well. A different verb with the same sense appears in Psalm 55 : 22 : “Cast thy burden on the Lord ;” literally, cast upon the Lord what He gives thee to bear, etc. Peter (1 Pet. 5 : 17) has the same precious thought : “Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.” C.

When thou art either to do or suffer anything, when thou art about any purpose or business, go tell God of it ; yea, burden Him with it, and thou hast done for matter of caring. No more care, but quiet, sweet diligence in thy duty, and dependence on Him for the carriage of thy matters. And in this prayer faith acts ; it is a believing requesting ; *ask in faith, not doubting* ; so thou rollest over all on Him, that is the very proper working of faith. The carrying the soul and all its desires out of itself unto God is here so expressed, *Roll over on God* ; make one bundle of all ; roll thy cares and thyself with them as one burden, all on thy God. L.

There is but one way to serenity of mind and happiness ; let this, therefore, be always ready at hand with thee, both when thou wakest early in the morning, and all the day long, and when thou goest late to sleep, to account no external things thine own, but to commit all these to God. *Epictetus*.—Bless God for what you have, and trust God for what you want. Commit your souls to God’s keeping, and submit yourselves to God’s disposing. Obey His revealed will, and then be resigned to His providential will. *J. Mason*.—Cast all thy care on God, and commit all to His good pleasure ; laud and praise and applaud Him in all things, small and great ; forsake thy own will, and deliver up thyself freely and cheerfully to the will of God, without reserve or exception, in prosperity and adversity, to have or to want, to live or to die. The sum is : remember always the presence of God ; rejoice always in the will of God ; and direct all to the glory of God. L.

He shall bring it to pass. Committing and trusting is our work—to bring to pass is the Lord’s. Committing our way to God unburdens the mind ; trusting our all to Him makes the heart easy ; relying on Him to bring our concerns to pass makes the spirit joyful. *W. Mason*.—While we are ready, perhaps, to recognize God’s providence in the greater afflictions of life, we fail to include in that guiding providence the petty annoyances of our com-

mon days ; the languor which unfits for duty ; the cloud that passes over the spirits ; the domestic cross, the chafing of temper in trade ; the slight, the unkindness, the forgetfulness which we endure from thoughtless or selfish fellow-creatures. Yet the law is universal. Not merely the journey, but every step of the journey, is ordered. No part of our way is left to ourselves. Resignation and faith behold God in the smallest occurrences ; and the happiest life is that of him who has bound together all the affairs of life, great and small, and intrusted them to God. Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and *He will bring it to pass*. J. W. A.

Waiting upon God continually will abate your unnecessary cares, and sweeten your necessary ones. The same spirit of faith which teaches a man to cry earnestly, teaches him to wait patiently ; for, as it assures him the mercy is in the Lord’s hand, so it assures him it will be given forth in the Lord’s time. *J. Mason*.—He shall bring that to pass, whatever it is, which thou hast committed to Him, if not to thy contrivance, yet to thy content. He will find means to extricate thee out of thy straits, to prevent thy fears, and bring about thy purposes, to thy satisfaction. H.

Leave to Him the guidance of thy life, and thou shalt be at peace on the road. This is a word for *all life* ; not only for its great occasions, but for the small decisions of every hour. Our histories are made up of a series of trifles, in each of which a separate act of will and choice is involved. Looking to the mysterious way in which the greatest events in our lives have the knack of growing out of the smallest ; looking to the power of habit to make any action of the mind almost instinctive, it is of far more importance that we should become accustomed to apply this precept of seeking guidance from God to the million trifles than to the two or three decisions which, at the time of making them, we know to be weighty. But committing our way unto the Lord does not mean shifting the trouble of patient thought about our duty off our own shoulders. Just because we are to commit our way to Him, we are bound to the careful exercise of the best power of our own brains, that we may discover what the will of God is. I suppose the precursor of all visions of Him, which have calmed His servants’ souls with the peace of a clearly recognized duty, has been their cry, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ?” God counsels men who use their own wits to find out His counsel. He speaks to us through our judg-

ments when they take all the ordinary means of ascertaining our course. The law is : you do your best to find out your duty ; you suppress inclination, and desire to do God's will, and He will certainly tell you what it is. This law prescribes the subordination—not the extinction—of our own inclinations. It prescribes the submission of our judgment to God, in the confidence that His wisdom will guide us. These two keys—joy in God and trust in His guidance—open for us the double doors of the secret place of the Most High. A. M.

6. A Christian whom circumstances have misrepresented, but whose conscience is clear, always has this assurance, that he can afford to wait for his vindication. Rarely if ever does integrity fail to be recognized at last. The words of the Psalmist, "He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light," are certain of fulfilment. Matters never have been settled finally unless they have been settled rightly. It is in accord with both the nature of things and the Divine will that goodness shall triumph over evil, and that its supremacy shall be evident to all ; and any beliefs, plans, efforts, or even any apparently established institutions, which are based upon the disregard of this fact are certain to fall. *Congregationalist*.

7. Rest in the Lord. Let your intellect, your judgment, your reason, rest in God ; in God personal, and possessed of every perfection—almighty and all-knowing, kind, righteous, and holy ; that is, in a God truly Divine. And we add, Rest in the Lord merciful and gracious. Rest in the Lord as He reveals Himself in the Gospel, propitious to the penitent, ready to receive all who accept His overtures of reconciliation, ready to pardon and to protect from the consequences of their own misdeeds all who in the name of the Saviour come to Him. *Hamilton*.—Spiritual quiet of soul is founded on knowledge of God, faith in Christ, a tranquillized conscience, a weakening of the sinful principle, submission to God, trust in His promises, and holy contemplation of the supreme excellence, as offered for the communion of our spirits. J. W. A.

This rest, this power of being at rest belongs to the heart alone, to the seat of his affections. And why ? Because love satisfies the heart, and the heart can love Him who, being Himself infinite, is at once and forever all that love can crave. By the sense of utter blankness which the heart experiences when it loves not, by the absolute incapacity of all earthly things to fill it, by its own strong cravings and yearnings, we learn that it is God's will that its real and

best affections should be concentrated on Him alone. Even as the needle rests from its strange, uneasy trembling then only when it points true to the pole, so the heart can then only be at rest when it is filled with the love of God. And this is the reward of God's faithful people. This loving God, all-wise, all-tender, all-sympathetic, all-great, all-sufficing, revealing Himself as man to man, is He who gives Himself to the human heart to satisfy its longing for love. He who made the heart such that it yearns after Him and can find no peace but in Him, Himself becomes its portion. God is the reward of His people in life, in death, in eternity. *W. J. Butler*.

"Rest in the Lord ;" or, literally, "Be silent," not "in the Lord," but "to the Lord ;" be silent in His presence, be silent before Him, be silent for Him. It would have been almost as well if the original word had been transferred, instead of making the attempt at translating ; for the Hebrew word translated "rest" is "dum." We should have understood the meaning of the Psalmist, and his thought would have been literally expressed, if the rendering had been, "Be dumb before the Lord"—dumb in His presence and dumb for Him. That is to say, do not make even so much as an attempt to justify the ways of God with yourself and with others whose hearts are crushed. Recognize at the very outset that you are not competent to deal with the problem, and refuse to take the first step into the mazes of this labyrinth. Be dumb before your God, be dumb in His presence. If we, then, were to translate this old advice into Christian terms of speech, we should say this : "Fret not. Be silent in the presence of thy God, who gave His Son to die for you. Let the compassion and the intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ quiet all the tumult of your heart, and provoke you to a silence that is full of confidence and joy." Yes, for us the cross is the conclusion of the painful controversy. It lies like a bright rift upon the dark thunder-cloud, through which the light celestial streams upon us, so that it reveals unto us the gates of pearl and the walls of jasper and the golden domes of the City of God.

Wait patiently for God. That word is very forcible, too. The verb means, to fling one's self with impetuosity upon an object, to rush with speed into an open refuge, and then, having gained it, to stand there and patiently to abide the issue. All that we mean by waiting for God is implied here, but a great deal more. It means not only waiting for God, but waiting upon Him and waiting by His side. It means

an active, ardent, living identification of ourselves with God. Stand by Him, beneath the shadow of His wings, and be active in thy waiting—that is to say, obey His will, do His work, and for the rest, commit thy way unto the Lord. *Behrends.*

One of our hardest lessons is to find out the wisdom of our hindrances ; how we are to be put forward and upward by being put back and put down ; encouraged by being rebuked ; prospered by being baffled. Gradually, to believing eyes, the fact comes out. Standing still at the right time, in the right way, for the right purpose, is the surest advance. Waiting on God brings us to our journey's end faster than our feet. The failure of our favorite plans is often the richest success of the soul. F. D. H.

What else is there for a man fronting the vague future ? Is it not better, happier, nobler, every way truer, to look into that perilous, uncertain future, or rather to look past it to the loving Father who is its Lord and ours, and to wait patiently for Him ? Confidence that the future will but evolve God's purposes, and that all these are enlisted on our side, will give you peace and power. We are sure that in the future are losses, and sorrows, and death. Thank God, we are sure, too, that He is in it. That certainty alone and what comes of it makes it possible for a thoughtful man to face to-morrow without fear or tumult. A. M.

Patient waiting clearly recognizes the government of heaven as superintending all, directing and controlling things most intricate, and out of seeming evil deducing real good. It knows that in His hands, whom seraphim and cherubim adore, all must be righteous, pure, and good. Patience listens to the promises and gracious declarations of the oracles of truth. And can one word of promise fall ? Will God forget, or lose His power or willingness to save those who have trusted in His love ? Rather will heaven itself forever pass away than one engagement of His mouth shall not be to the very utmost verified. *Jabez Burns.*

Courage is the mission of a few ; patience is the duty of all. Courage is most beautiful before men ; but the patience that sits quiet at Christ's feet, and bears meekly Christ's rebuke, is far more beautiful. And when we experience trials, unable to explain their meaning or to unravel their mystery, knowing nothing of their purpose, object, aim, or issue, we learn to rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. And our faith, too, is strengthened ; that faith which believes God is there, though we see Him not. And obedience is strengthened ; for the

command is, "Do not ask the reason, but do it." And hope is strengthened ; for we learn to hope to the end. And ultimately thankfulness is invigorated ; for we learn to praise Him who has wrought all things so well. *Cumming.*

Trust, rest, wait patiently ; for there will be need of trust and rest and patient waiting. God's way will often be a mystery ; it is in the sea, in the deep waters, past finding out. We must learn to be content to suffer, to fail, to lose all that makes earthly life worth living, if it so be that God's way leads through these. And we must learn also that the most fatal earthly disaster may be but the outward texture of circumstance for the highest heavenly success. S. S. T.—Study to follow God's will in all, to have no will but His. This is thy duty and thy wisdom. Nothing is gained by spurning and struggling, but to hurt and vex thyself ; but by complying, all is gained, sweet peace ; it is the very secret, the mystery of solid peace within, to resign to His will, to be disposed at His pleasure, without the least contrary thought. It is the sum of Christianity to have thy will crucified, and the will of thy Lord thy only desire ; joy or sorrow, sickness or health, life or death, in all, in all, *Thy will be done.* L.

But loosen no nerve of resistance ; slacken no effort to press on ; suspend no prayer for the Spirit. Otherwise you do not rest *in* the Lord, but rest *from* Him, and instead of waiting, like the blind man, for the Saviour's coming, you wait for Him to pass by. But inasmuch as the struggle is long, and you are mortal, and life without your Father is orphanage, keep very near to your Lord ; rest in Him, wait patiently for Him. "With Him is plentiful redemption." Leave all issues and results with Him, saying reverently, as Luther did of his greater work, "Let the Lord God look to that." F. D. H.

The Saviour still leaves us, as He left His first disciples in the garden, with the words, "Tarry ye here and watch," and promises to come again. If hope can lay hold of this promise, and keep it fast, patience will maintain its post like a sentinel who is sure of relief at the appointed hour, and if the hour seems long, will beguile it with those words, which have passed like a "song in the night" through many a weary heart, "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." Then, as hope strengthens patience, patience in return will strengthen hope. Such allies are all the Christian graces, children in one family, who, if there be love among them,

supplement each other by their opposites. If a man is enabled to "rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him," it is a reason to him for hoping that there is a Divine work going on in his life, which the God of patience and consolation will complete. *Ker.*

No man is free from care till he cast his care upon the Lord. And hence it is that, throughout Scripture, we are taught to commit our way unto God, to rest in Him, and to wait patiently for Him. He that sitteth in the pure, calm heavens looks down with pity on the world of care and turmoil and excitement we have created for ourselves, and virtually says to us: "Why load yourselves with so many burdens hard to be borne? Do your duty, live your life, enjoy your life, and leave all else with Me. I care for you; I will provide." What a changed world, what a changed life it would be, could we but trust Him, could we but listen and respond when, fatherly and compassionate, He thus pleads with us! All the hurry, all the fret, all the chafe would be gone out of it—all that is wearing us out and destroying us before our time. We should be raised above the reach of change, into the life eternal, the life that does not consist in meat or drink, in gain or mirth, but in doing and enjoying the will of God. *Cox.*

Be quiet, and you will hear Him speak—delight in Him, that you may be quiet. Let the affections feed on Him, the will wait mute before Him, till His command inclines it to decision, and quickens it into action; let the desires fix upon His all-sufficiency; and then the wilderness will be no more trackless, but the ruddy blaze of the guiding pillar will brighten on the sand a path which men's hands have never made, nor human feet trodden into a road. He will guide us if our eyes be fixed on Him, and be swift to discern and eager to obey the lightest glance that love can interpret. . . . How blessed then to leave all the possible to-morrow with very quiet heart in His hands! How easy then to bear the ignorance, how possible then to face the certainties, of that solemn future! Change and death can only thin away and finally remove the film that separates us from our delight. Whatever comes here or yonder can but bring us blessing; for we must be glad if we have God, and our wills are parallel with His, whose will all things serve. Our way is traced by Him, and runs alongside of His. It leads to Himself. Then *rest in the Lord*, and judge nothing before the time. We cannot

criticise the Great Artist when we stand before His unfinished masterpiece, and see dim outlines here, a patch of crude color there; but *wait patiently for Him*. And so, in calm expectation of a blessed future and a finished work, which will explain the past, in honest submission of our way to God, in supreme delight in Him who is the gladness of our joy, the secret of tranquillity will be ours. A. M.

8. Those who indulge fretful feelings, either of anxiety or irritation, know not what an opening they thereby give to the devil in their hearts. "Fret not thyself," says the Psalmist; "it tendeth only to evil." And in entire harmony with this warning of the elder Scriptures is the precept of Paul against undue indulgence of anger: "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath, *neither give place to the devil*." E. M. G. —Evil will be the result of thy fretting. An angry state of the heart is a bad thing for the spiritual life; it throws it off its balance; it impairs its power of seeing and estimating truly; it indisposes the soul to communion with God; it tends to make men unjust and uncharitable and despondent and listless. A man cannot carry round with him such a raging fire in his bosom, and at the same time trust in the Lord and do good, and delight himself in the Lord. From being angry at men and things, the transition is easy to suspecting the wisdom of God. V.

Worrying destroys our power to discharge well to-day's duties. It divides our power and doubles our burden. It spoils our work and spoils us. To-day's failures brought about by to-day's worry go far toward breaking us down by to-morrow's burdens when they come. The days all fit into each other. To-day's success is half-parent to to-morrow's success; and failure, too, genders after its kind. And so life becomes after all a matter of to-day, "Give us *to-day* our daily bread." That life is blessed that is made up of days whose moments are severally filled with the strength of God. C. H. P.

There is a bound where dissatisfaction and unrest ought to end. Beyond that limit it becomes a hindrance to Christian growth, a fetter upon Christian liberty, a chill upon Christian zeal. Instead of inspiriting, it debilitates. By an easy and dangerous transition it passes into a morbid self-occupation, which shuts off charity for men and service to Christ. It becomes a practical denial of the supporting strength and the pledged grace of God. There can be little freedom, or heartiness, or efficiency, in the worship or the living, under this overshadowing anxiety. Better far always than indif-

ference or unconcern, it is not the natural, healthy state of a disciple. If it is an inevitable stage on the way to that state, yet it should always be treated as just that and no more—temporary, instrumental, immature: tending ever to peace; looking for the joy of believing; waiting for the promise of the Comforter; pressing on, with confident expectation, from the transient “spirit of bondage to fear,” which asks, “Who shall deliver me?” into the abiding “spirit of life in Christ Jesus,” where “there is no condemnation,” and into the blessed “spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father;” “if God be for us, who can be against us?” If it be possible, every Christian heart will feel it to be a part of its Christian endeavor and prayer to lay off the weight which burdens the race, exchanging it for this undoubting, full assurance of faith. F. D. H.

9. “*Those that wait upon the Lord*”—those who in patient faith expect their portion in another life—“*they shall inherit the earth.*” Even in this life they have the most of real enjoyment, and in the ages to come theirs shall be the glory and the triumph. Passion, according to Bunyan’s parable, has his good things first, and they are soon over; Patience has his good things last, and they last forever. S.

10. *And yet a little, i.e., ere long, soon—bear and forbear a little longer—and the wicked is not*—or there is no such person as the wicked man who seemed so prosperous—*and thou shalt gaze, or look attentively, upon his place, the place which he now occupies, and it is not, his very place has disappeared—or he is not, he is no more.* Why, then, be discomposed, and even tempted into sin, by the sight of what is so soon to vanish? A.

11. **The meek shall inherit the earth.** The violent, the unjust, the greedy, may grasp the earth for a time, but it is the meek, the gentle, never irritating, yet never withdrawing, persistent, generation after generation, in the practice and application of spiritual truth, it is they who truly inherit the earth. Young.

The meek man has nought to do with the motives of others; all that concerns him is the manner in which he himself may be trained and disciplined by those disquietudes, and discomforts, and disheartenings of life, which the conduct of others may bring. The result of this is that he goes through the world hurting, vexing, irritating no one. He is taking the poison from every sting. He is receiving upon his shield of faith every fiery dart of the wicked one. He is neutralizing every bitter—he is en-

joying every sweet; and thus he *inherits the earth.* Monsell.—The meek, and they only, possess the present earth, as they go toward the kingdom of heaven, by being humble, and cheerful, and content with what their good God has allotted them. They have no turbulent, repining, vexatious thoughts, that they deserve better; nor are vexed when they see others possessed of more honor or more riches than their wise God has allotted for their share. But they possess what they have with a meek and contented quietness; such a quietness as makes their very dreams pleasing both to God and themselves. Walton.

And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. Peace they love and peace they shall have. If they find not abundance of gold, abundance of peace will serve their turn far better. Peace leads on to peace, and the more a man loves it the more shall it come to him. In the halcyon period of the latter days, when universal peace shall make glad the earth, the full prophetic meaning of words like these will be made plain. S.

16. A little blessed is better than a great deal cursed, better than a world enjoyed. Therefore never let a Christian murmur because he hath but little, but rather let him be still a-blessing of that God that hath blessed his little, and doth bless his little, and that will bless his little to him. T. Brooks.—A godly man’s estate, though ever so little, is better than a wicked man’s estate, though ever so much, for it comes from a better hand, from a hand of special love, and not merely from a hand of common providence; it is enjoyed by a better title, God gives it to them by promise (Gal. 3:18), it is theirs by virtue of their relation to Christ, who is the Heir of all things; and it is put to a better use, it is sanctified to them by the blessing of God. H.

Strangers to Christ have the use of outward mercies, but cannot be properly said to have the enjoyment; they seem to be masters of them, but indeed they are servants to them. Nor is their use truly comfortable; they may fancy comfort, but their comfort is but a fancy. True, solid comfort is theirs only who have Christ for their portion. These may look upon every temporal enjoyment as a token of everlasting love. When we can say, “Christ loved me and gave Himself for me, that I might enjoy these blessings,” how will this raise the value of every common mercy! Upon this account is that of the Psalmist true, “*A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked.*” D. Clarkson.

18. Knoweth the days. He watcheth over, careth for, lovingly orders all that befalls them. P.—God takes particular notice of them, of all they do, and of all that happens to them. He keeps account of the days of their service, and not one day's work shall go unrewarded; and of the days of their suffering, that for those also they may receive a recompense. He knows their fair days, and has pleasure in their prosperity; he knows their cloudy and dark days, the days of their affliction, and, as the day is, so shall the strength be. H.

20. This verse shows how the truth of the foregoing promises can be consistent with the actual prosperity of wicked men. Do not doubt the truth of these assurances because the wicked now seem happy, or because they now prevent your being so, by their oppressions and hostilities. *For all this is soon to cease. The wicked shall perish, are to perish, and the enemies of Jehorah, another description of the same class, showing that these judgments awaited them, not merely as the foes of the Psalmist, or of righteous men in general, but of God Himself.* A.—Their prosperity doth but hasten their ruin, not their reward. The ox that is the laboring ox is the longer lived than the ox that is put into the pasture; the very putting of him there doth but hasten his slaughter; and when God puts wicked men into fat pastures, into places of honor and power, it is but to hasten their ruin. Let no man, therefore, fret himself because of evil-doers, nor be envious at the prosperity of the wicked. *Carbonensis.*

21. This verse expresses a deep and true moral aspect both of poverty and prosperity; the one, as a punishment for sin, involves an incapacity of discharging obligations; the other, as a reward of virtue, enables a man to confer benefits, and to be a blessing to his fellows. This explanation of the text is given by Calvin, and well defended by Hupfeld. The antithesis between "borroweth" and "showeth mercy" stands out more distinctly in the original, where each is expressed by a single word: the former implying cleaving, a helpless dependence on the lender; the latter a free, generous, and gracious distribution of benefits. *Cook.*

22. *For His blessed ones*, those blessed by God, *shall inherit the land*, in the same sense as before, and so be able not only to lend but to give away; *but His cursed ones*, those cursed by Him, shall not only be unable to do either, and dependent on the charity of others, but *shall be cut off*, destroyed, exterminated, with allusion no doubt to the use of the same Hebrew verb

in reference to excision from the communion and the privileges of the chosen people. A.

23. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." This was not only true in fact, but in David's experience. It was just what he felt and what he said in talking about his various escapes and all the incidents of his life. It was the Lord who delivered him from the lion and the bear, who gave him the victory over Goliath, who sent Samuel to anoint him king, who gave him the love of Jonathan, who saved him in the battle with the Philistines, who made his arm strong and his heart courageous in the day of battle. Yes, it was the Lord in him and around him and over him, "a sun and a shield," who made him what he was and gave him what he had, and through him carried forward that great work for which David had been chosen. *T. W. Hooper.*

Walking is a matter of steps; and in God's training of men He directs their attention to the single steps rather than to the course of their lives as a whole, to the details of the life rather than to the life at large. "The steps of a good man" are *established*; not ordered each day as emergencies arise, but *prearranged*. The "good man" of the Psalmist's thought is the man who recognizes the excellence and the rightful claim of the Divine law, and who gives himself up to it. The Bible alternative is very sharp and plain. Either we are to be ordered by God, or we are to be self-ordered. If we undertake to order our own steps, we must take the consequences, and relinquish all claim upon God's ordering. V.

The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; by His grace and holy Spirit He directs the thoughts, affections, and designs of good men; He has all hearts in His hand, but theirs by their own consent; by His providence He overrules the events that concern them so as to make their way plain before them, both what they should do, and what they may expect. Observe, God orders the steps of a good man; not only his way in general by His written Word, but his particular steps. He does not always show him his way at a distance, but leads him step by step, as children are led, and so keeps him in a continual dependence upon His guidance; and this because He delights in His way, and is well pleased with the paths of righteousness wherein he walks. H.

He delighteth in his way. I have seen young parents laughing with joy when they have observed the first steps which the little ones take—they delighted in their way. And so God is represented as bending from

above over us, and ordering the steps of a good man, watching his pathway, holding him by the hand, leading him in the way he should go, and delighting in his way. And never was a tender and loving parent so delighted in marking the footsteps of a child, as God in watching the ways of a good man—delighted at all his efforts in the paths of piety and peace. *M. Simpson.*—Christ is the God of Providence. All your steps, if you are His, are ordered by Him, ordered with all the care and tenderness with which He sought you out and brought you to the faith and love of Him. He has left words of sympathy and comfort for you in every trial. He is the good Shepherd, who calls you to walk only in the paths He has trod first. H. H.

24. Though he fall. In this life fluctuations and reverses are to be expected, and it forms no part of the Divine plan to prevent them. (But) *he shall not be thrown down*, prostrated wholly or forever. The contrast of a mere fall and a permanent prostration is intended to express that between occasional misfortunes and utter ruin. *A.*—Even in our falls the Lord gives a measure of sustaining. Where grace does not keep from going down, it shall save from keeping down. It is not that the saints are strong, or wise, or meritorious, that therefore they rise after every fall but because God is their helper, and therefore none can prevail against them. S.

The steps of a good man are established in spite of his fall. Walking in the way of God's order brings with it that strong, immortal, unconquerable principle which reasserts itself after every fall, and keeps the man's face set toward God, and his feet pressing on along the heavenward road. It is a Divine principle, the very hand of God stretched forth each time in fulfilment of this promise: "He shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand." . . . From these truths we conclude: If God has ordained a way for men to walk in, it is the height of folly to walk in any other way. If God orders our ways, step by step, it becomes us to take heed to the details of our lives. If God orders each detail of our lives, ought we not to get great and solid comfort from the fact? It becomes us to fall in with God's order, and to attach to the separate steps the same importance that He does. V.

25. Literally, "I have been young; also, have been old," and therefore have had long years of observation; but I have never seen the righteous forsaken of God. He makes all

things work together for good to those who love and trust Him. His posterity also are blessed and never brought to beg their bread. In those ages pre-eminently, God manifested His favor to His people by means of earthly and present good. *C.*—I believe this to be literally true in all cases. I am now gray-headed myself; I have travelled in different countries, and have had many opportunities of seeing and conversing with religious people in all situations in life; and I have not seen one instance to the contrary. I have seen no *righteous man forsaken*, nor any *children* of the righteous *begging their bread*. God puts honor upon all that fear Him; and thus careful is He of *them* and of their *posterity*. *A. Clarke.*—The blessed habits of piety early formed and vigorously maintained, the habits of faith, of prayer, of industry, of temperance, of knowledge and of love, are, in the very nature and order of things, a security against evil. They have the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. I have been young and now am old, said the Psalmist, yet have I never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. *Cheever.*

26. The good man "*is merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed.*" What the worldling thinks shall make his posterity poor, God saith shall make the good man's rich. The precept gives a promise of mercy to obedience, not confined to the obedient man's self, but extended to his seed. Trust, then, Christ with thy children. *T. Adams.*—The righteous are constantly under generous impulses; they do not prosper through parsimony, but through bounty. How stingy covetous professors can hope for salvation is a marvel to those who read such verses as this in the Bible. "*And his seed is blessed.*" God pays back with interest in the next generation. The friend of the father is the friend of the family. The God of Abraham is the God of Isaac and of Jacob. S.

So far is charity from impoverishing, that what is given away, like vapors emitted by the earth, returns in showers of blessings into the bosom of the person that gave it, and his offspring is not the worse, but infinitely better for it. *Horne.*—"Charity is a virtue of the heart, and not of the hands," says an old writer. Gifts and alms are the expression, not the essence, of this virtue. A man may bestow great sums on the poor without being charitable, and may be charitable when he is not able to bestow anything. *Addison.*

Charity diffuses itself over the soul, and causes us to love all men. We are charitable

to the poor, not by what we give, but by the spirit in which we give. *Book of Symbols.*—*The constraint of law can never produce the highest goodness. The only constraint should be that of love.* If the clouds be “full of rain” they must burst in showers of blessing upon the earth. They are the natural image of a heart that can hold out no more, that blesses by a sweet constraint, and in doing good to others relieves itself. The highest natures are not ashamed to own the gracious necessity under which they are laid by love. *Homilist.*

27. Do good. Negative goodness is not sufficient to entitle us to heaven. There are some in the world whose religion runs all upon negatives; they are not drunkards, they are not swearers, and for this they do bless themselves. We are bid not only to *cease from evil*, but to *do good*. It is not enough for the servant of the vineyard that he doth no hurt there, he doth not break the trees or destroy the hedges; if he doth not work in the vineyard he loseth his pay. It is not enough for us to say at the last day, we have done no hurt, we have lived in no gross sin; but what good have we done in the vineyard? *T. Adams.*—It is not enough not to do hurt in the world, but we must study to be useful, and live to some purpose. We must not only depart from evil, but we must do good; good for ourselves, especially for our own souls, employing them well, furnishing them with a good treasure, and fitting them for another world; and, as we have ability and opportunity, we must do good to others also. *H.*

Engage in some direct effort to do good. Seek to leave the world the better for your sojourn in it. Whatever you attempt, endeavor to do it so thoroughly, and follow it up so resolutely, that the result shall be ascertained and evident. And in your attempts at usefulness, be not only conscientious but enthusiastic. Love the work. Redeem the time. Remember that the Lord is at hand. *Hamilton.*

We are to carry such a sense of indebtedness to our dear Lord and Master, that we shall be always trying to find opportunities and outlets to bless others. We are to live, finding in all the daily intercourse with men a hundred fresh channels by which the Father's love may flow into their midst. For His sake, for the sake of others, for our own sakes, let us strive after this as the fairest and only satisfying token of a holy life—this unfailing brotherliness. *Pearse.*—Remember, at home, in the shop, and in the counting-house, that you are epistles of Christ; and that in your spirit, habits, and

character His very thoughts are to be translated into forms which common men can read and understand. Through you it is meant that the Holy Ghost should speak, not in mere words, but in acts, which are more intelligible and emphatic than words. The very life of the Spirit of God is intended to be manifested in your conduct, as the life of a plant is manifested in the flower, and the life of a tree in the fruit. Your religious emotions irreligious men can know nothing of, but your virtues and vices are a language plain and familiar to them as their mother tongue. They can read these without note or comment. *R. W. Dale.*

30, 31. From the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, so that you may know the good man who fears and loves God by the free utterance of his most cherished thoughts. God will uphold such a man so that none of his steps shall slide as if on an unstable foundation. **C.—The law of his God is in his heart.** He hath a Bible in his head, and another in his heart; he hath a good treasure within, and there hence bringeth good things. *Trapp.*—It is but a jest and a mockery to speak wisdom, and to talk of judgment, unless we have the law in our hearts, and we think as we speak. The law of God must be a commanding, ruling principle in the heart; it must be a light there, a spring there, and then the conversation will be regular and uniform, *none of his steps will slide*; it will effectually prevent backsliding into sin, and the uneasiness that follows from it. *H.*

33. In due season just men will be justified. Temporary injustices are tolerated, in the order of Providence, for purposes most wise; but the bitter shall not always be called sweet, nor light forever be traduced as darkness; the right shall appear in due season; the fictitious and pretentious shall be unmasked, and the real and true shall be revealed. *S.*

34. To all who are perplexed in any way soever, who wish for light but cannot find it, one precept must be given—*obey*. It is obedience which brings a man into the right path; it is obedience keeps him there and strengthens him in it. Under all circumstances, whatever the cause of distress, *obey*. “Wait on the Lord, and keep His way.” Go about your duty; mind little things as well as great. And such obedient waiting upon Him will surely obtain His blessing. *Newman.*—“*And He shall exalt thee to inherit the land.*” Thou shalt have all of earthly good which is really good, and of heavenly good there shall be no stint. Exaltation shall be the lot of the excellent. “*When*

the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it." A sight how terrible and how instructive! What a rebuke for fretfulness! what an incentive to gratitude! S.

35. *I saw a wicked (man).* The issue just predicted is now made the subject of a picture, as if present to the senses. The Hebrew word which follows means terrible, especially from one's extraordinary strength or power, with an implication sometimes of its violent exertion. *I saw (such) a wicked man, a terrible one, and spreading himself like a native (tree),* one which has never been transplanted, green and flourishing. The word translated *native* is always elsewhere used of human subjects, but is here applied, by a bold personification, to a vigorous tree, rooted in its native soil, and seemingly immovable.

36. *And he passed (away), and lo!* an expression always implying something unexpected, *he was not*, he was no more, there was no longer such a person. *And I sought him.* I looked round as if to see what was become of him, *and he was not found*, or, as we might say, *to be found*.

37. *Mark the perfect (man),* observe him closely, *and behold the upright,* or straightforward. He appeals to general experience, and calls upon his hearers or readers to judge for themselves. A.—**The latter end is peace.** Here is the saint's *character* and the saint's *crown*; he is characterized by uprightness or sincerity, and crowned with peace. Here is the Christian's *way* and his *end*, his *motion* and his *rest*. His way is holiness, his end happiness; his motion is toward perfection and in uprightness; his rest is peace at his journey's end. J. Whitlock.—Observe, it is not said that the end is to be joy or transport, but *peace*; for joy is not promised to any, but that their end shall be *peace*. A calm sense of the Divine favor, a peace in believing, which passeth all understanding. Peace is the bread of God's children; it is the fruit of His pardoning love—the effect of justification: it is that which the Christian lives upon; it is the bread of life, and therefore God will not deny it to him in a dying hour. R. Hall.

If you would die well, you must have a care to live well: *qualis vita, finis ita*, if you would die quietly, you must live strictly; if you would die comfortably, you must live conformably; if you would die happily, you must live holily. "*Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.*" J. Kitchen.—For he knows whom he has believed, and is persuaded that He is able to keep

that which he has committed unto Him until that day. He knows to what he is passing—to a world which is brighter, a bliss which is deeper, than even his most vivid dreams. The rest—and a man has other cares at such hours—he leaves with God. To be able to cast his care upon Him who he knows will care—care with a tenderness of which earth has no measures—is peace, the peace of God in the contemplation of the future of our beloved. Baldwin Brown.

Of the great number to whom it has been my professional duty to have administered in the last hour of their lives, I have seen those who have arrived at a fearless contemplation of the future, from faith in the doctrine which our religion teaches. Such men were not only calm and supported, but cheerful, in the hour of death; and I never quitted such a sick-chamber without a hope that my last end might be like theirs. Sir Henry Hallford.

38. The end of the wicked shall be cut off. The wicked in this world do easily run up without interruption, many times with acclamations and applause, all the golden steps of honors and preferments; but upon the highest stair they find the most slippery standing, and the top of their earthly felicity is the most immediate and certain descent unto the greatest downfall. They fairly glide over the sea of this world with full sail, with much calmness and serenity, and richly laden; but in the brightest sunshine, and when they least suspect it, they suddenly and without recovery sink into the gulf of darkness and desolation. R. Bolton.—"Condemned already," not because you have sinned, but because you believe not. Not because you are a sinner, but because you are an unbeliever. Not because you have lived in darkness, but because you come not to the light. An.—The wiser, the juster, the stronger-minded any man is, so much the more can he control and use his indignation, "possessing it, but not possessed by it," and punish the offender according to law, calmly though sternly, pitifully though ruthlessly. Even so, our highest reason bids us believe, does God Himself, who does all things by law. C. Kingsley.

40. He *delivereth* them; because they *trust* in Him. The whole lesson of the Psalm lies in these words. P.—There is no way under heaven to be interested in Christ, but by believing. *He that believeth shall be saved*, let his sins be ever so great; and *he that believeth not shall be damned*, let his sins be ever so little. T. Brooks.

Most appropriately this Psalm closes by

ascribing this wonderful salvation of the righteous, not to his personal merit or to his efficiency in saving himself, but to the Lord alone, his strength in all trouble, his helper and deliverer against all evils and perils, whether of body or soul, whether material or spiritual. In this, David speaks in harmony with the feelings and convictions of every truly righteous man. It is their perpetual joy to ascribe their help here and their salvation both here and hereafter to the glorious Lord alone. C.—Oh, shame on our faithlessness, mistrust, and unbelief, that we do not believe such rich, powerful, consolatory declarations of God! *Luther.*

Summary of the Psalm. This Psalm is addressed to a soul which is confused and alarmed by this aspect of the world. It clearly recognizes the facts which make it uneasy and tempt it to fretfulness. Hints of them are scattered from one end of it to the other. The very first verse recognizes the presence and work of evil-doers. They plot against the just; they watch the righteous: they lie in wait to slay him. Not only so, they *succeed*. They bring wicked devices *to pass*. They are in *great* power, and spread themselves like green bay-trees. Good men are slandered, pure reputations are blackened, the helpless and the innocent fall under the harrow of the wicked and the designing. From such facts the thought runs naturally to the whole great mystery of God's administration in the world. *God's* administration! So dire is the confusion at times, so sharp the contradiction, so baffling the mystery of providence, so imperceptible the progress of truth and of virtue, that the hold of the strongest faith trembles, and the spectral doubt thrusts its leering lineaments into the face of God's child—"Do all things indeed work together for good?" It is not only that wickedness is rampant, but that goodness is tainted; that good men are weak, and bigoted, and most positive and aggressive where they should be most humble and docile; that the very men and women who seem most necessary are stricken down; that in *religion*, no less than in worldly things, men are carried away by the shallow, the plausible, and the transient, rather than anchored to the deep, abiding, eternal truth. While the Psalm opens to us this picture—and it is as old as human society, and has tortured the minds of good and true men from the beginning of time—it also puts us in the right attitude toward this mystery and confusion. Over against it all it sets the great truth—"God reigns," and the consequent precept—"trust in Him."

To the man who is thus troubled, and anxious, and tempted to fret, it says, "Fret not thyself. Society, lawless, aimless as it appears, is held in God's hand. Leave it there; labor to improve your corner of it; do good in your own day and generation; instead of despairing, *trust* in the Lord; instead of fretting, *delight* yourself in God; instead of being restless, *rest* in the Lord; hold thou still in Jehovah, He shall bring it to pass." "Yes," is the reply, "but He is *so long* in bringing it to pass; He makes me wait so long." So He does, and probably will; and it is this side of the lesson of faith in God which is strongly emphasized in this Psalm—the lesson of *waiting*. And that is the side of faith which develops most slowly. *Working* is not always a sign of faith. There are certain natures to which work is an instinct and a necessity; and such usually turn to work in times of sorrow or trouble, to "*work it off*," as they say. But if a man merely *diverts* his mind from trouble, or *forgets* trouble in work, his relief is *work*, not *God*." Diversion and oblivion are not faith. Successful work involves no faith; it is only joy. Faith's harder lesson is given in making a man lie still, and not work at all, but simply bear and wait; it is given in God's both smiting him and tying his hands; in his being forced to stand still and see wrong consummated, and villainy successful, and the wicked in great power; it is given in his being compelled to work without success, as men style it; to labor for consummations which God indefinitely postpones; it is under such discipline that he wants God, no one less, to say to him, Hold thou still in Jehovah, and wait patiently for Him.

Our lives are what their details are. The goal is reached by God's ordering of their separate steps. The only thing we are to be careful about is that we step each time in God's track. We see only a little of the way in front; we have got to make our way by single steps, if we make it at all; and though God checks our steps, and turns our steps in strange directions, makes us step now and then off what seems to us solid ground, upon what seems like treacherous soil, makes us wait, and wait, and wait in our slow stepping for the appearance of the promised goal—all is well if we only hold fast the truth that each step is in the line of a Divine order, and that the way by which God leads us, though it seem like threading a hopeless labyrinth, is the way in which He delights, because it leads up to Him. Rest in the Lord then. Hold thou still in Jehovah and wait patiently for Him. Whether He bid

thee stand still, or wait in working for the long-delayed end—wait thou *unwaveringly*, keeping His way, and not turning aside to thine own ; wait thou *cheerfully*, not fretting thyself in any wise to do evil ; wait thou *confidently*, trusting in Him to bring His perfect will to pass. V.

PSALM XXXVIII.

A PSALM OF DAVID, TO BRING TO REMEMBRANCE.

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| <p>1 O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath :
Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.</p> <p>2 For thine arrows stick fast in me,
And thy hand presseth me sore.</p> <p>3 There is no soundness in my flesh because
of thine indignation ;
Neither is there any health [<i>rest</i>] in my
bones because of my sin.</p> <p>4 For mine iniquities are gone over mine head :
As an heavy burden they are too heavy for
me.</p> <p>5 My wounds stink and are corrupt,
Because of my foolishness.</p> <p>6 I am pained and bowed down greatly ;
I go mourning all the day long.</p> <p>7 For my loins are filled with burning ;
And there is no soundness in my flesh.</p> <p>8 I am faint and sore bruised :
I have groaned by reason of the disquietness
of my heart.</p> <p>9 LORD, all my desire is before thee
And my groaning is not hid from thee.</p> <p>10 My heart throbberh, my strength faileth
me :
As for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone
from me.</p> <p>11 My lovers and my friends stand aloof from
my plague ;
And my kinsmen stand afar off.</p> | <p>12 They also that seek after my life lay snares
<i>for me</i> ;
And they that seek my hurt speak mis-
chievous things,
And imagine deceits all the day long.</p> <p>13 But I, as a deaf man, hear not ;
And I am as a dumb man that openeth not
his mouth.</p> <p>14 Yea, I am as a man that heareth not,
And in whose mouth are no arguments.</p> <p>15 For in thee, O LORD, do I hope :
Thou wilt answer, O LORD my God.</p> <p>16 For I said, Lest they rejoice over me :
When my foot slippeth, they magnify them-
selves against me.</p> <p>17 For I am ready to fall,
And my sorrow is continually before me.</p> <p>18 For I will declare mine iniquity ;
I will be sorry for my sin.</p> <p>19 But mine enemies are lively, <i>and</i> are strong :
And they that hate me wrongfully are mul-
tiplied.</p> <p>20 They also that render evil for good
Are adversaries unto me, because I follow the
thing that is good.</p> <p>21 Forsake me not, O LORD :
O my God, be not far from me.</p> <p>22 Make haste to help me,
O LORD my salvation.</p> |
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THIS Psalm tells the story of a bitter suffering. The suffering is both in body and in mind. The body is wasted by a cruel and loathsome disease, and the mind is full of anguish, arising partly from a deep sense of sin, and partly from the fear of relentless and now rejoicing enemies. Body and mind, in such circumstances, act and react upon one another. Mental anguish impairs the strength of the body ; and bodily suffering and weakness make us less able to face with steady and resolute courage the horrors which crowd upon the mind. To add to his distress, the sufferer is deserted even of his friends. They to whose

kind offices he might naturally have looked at such a time ; they who had been his friends in his health and prosperity, and who might now have watched by his sick-bed, and spoken words of comfort to him in his sorrow, turned coldly away, and left him alone with his grief. A burning fever consumed him (v. 7), his heart beat hotly, his eyes failed him, the bitter remembrance of his sin was with him ; there was the consciousness and the fear of God's displeasure, and, as if this were not enough, there was, besides all this, the utter loneliness, never so hard to bear as in such a season of bodily and mental prostration ; the weary couch, never so weary

as when no hand is there to smooth it ; the pain of the disease far more acutely felt, because none offered sympathy ; the terrors of conscience and of the imagination aggravated, because they had to be endured in solitude. Suffering seems here to have reached its height. But out of the very midst of the furnace the sufferer can say, " Lord, before Thee is all my desire—in Thee, O Jehovah, have I hoped ;" can cry with all the earnestness of a faith purified by affliction, " Leave me not, be not far from me, O Lord, my salvation." The Psalm may be said to consist of three principal parts, each of which opens with an address to God. Each of these contains an appeal to God's mercy—each rests it on different grounds. P.

Among the penitential Psalms none bear deeper marks of a season of utter prostration of heart and spirit, of a combination of the most cruel trials, mental and bodily ; the strain is continued without intermission to the end of the forty-first Psalm, which closes the first book of Psalms. The history of David leaves us no doubt as to the time and circumstances under which it was composed. It must have been some time after the complete awakening of his conscience to the deadly guilt contracted by Uriah's death, when the results of that act were manifested in the fearful disorders of his family, polluted by incest and murder ; in the estrangement of his dearest friends and nearest kinsmen ; in the triumph of malicious and slanderous enemies ; in agonies of mind, accompanied and exaggerated by a terrible malady, of which the symptoms, elsewhere noted, are described most vividly in this Psalm, the flesh diseased, the bones racked, the loins filled with fierce pain, the heart panting, strength failing, the eye darkened as with the shadow of death ; all attributed by the Psalmist himself to his own sin. Yet withal there is a sense of inward communion. David knows that the hand which presses on him is for chastisement, and that the Lord hears his groaning ; his confession and contrition are combined with hope ; he desires to be nearer God, and sums up all with calling upon the Lord as his salvation. All these things point to the period just preceding the revolt of Absalom. At that time there are indications that David was prostrate by disease, which gave full scope to the machinations of his son and his abettors ; from which he recovered only to witness their success.

The Psalm is frequently referred to in the New Testament. Its application to the Saviour, of whom David was a type in so many points, in none more so than in suffering, is

natural ; but though prophetic in the sense that the words came from David's heart under the influence which made them true exponents of feelings which reached their highest intensity in the representative of fallen man, the Psalm is not predictive, it speaks of the present and actual, not of the future and ideal ; it belongs to a man not only of sorrow but of sin ; of sin not merely imputed but committed ; and as such is adopted without modification by conscience-smitten sinners, even while they feel that Christ's acceptance of the burden and participation of the agonies assures them of the help which David sought, and gives them a certainty of deliverance. *Cook.*

The Psalms discover to us the inner man of David, and in the inner man of David they discover to us in some sort the inner man of all the prophets of God. He composes his Psalms, or a great part of them, in the midst of the most cruel sufferings. Imagine, then, bowed down by suffering, physical, moral, and spiritual, you were called upon to compose a Psalm, and that from the bosom of all these sufferings, and at the very moment when they were such as those which he describes in this Psalm, should issue hymns to the glory of God and for the instruction of the Church. What a triumph David gains over himself, and what a humiliation it is for us, who in our weakness are mostly obliged to wait till our sufferings are passed, in order to reap the fruit of them ourselves or to impart the benefit to others. But David, in the midst of his sufferings, writes his Psalms. He writes his thirty-eighth Psalm while he undergoes those persecutions, those inward torments, that bitterness of sin. It is in the furnace that he writes these lines, which are intended to be the encouragement of the Church in all ages. *A. Monod.*

2. It is not merely as a complaint but as an appeal to the mercy of God that he tells all his woe. There is a yet further appeal in the recognition of God's hand. "*Thine* arrows . . . *Thy* hand." It is this conviction that God has inflicted the chastisement, that leads him to seek the remedy from the same source.

3. No soundness. No health ; or " whole-ness." Such is the proper and original meaning of the word *shālôm*, *integritas*, " peace" being the derived meaning, peace only there properly existing where all is *complete* and *entire*, nothing wanting. P.—All the miseries are referred to their proper end. The sin is not bewailed merely on account of its ill effect on the guilty one, but on account of the despite done to God. It is not the " arrows"

that afflict him so much as that they are God's. The reason why there is no health in his flesh is because of God's displeasure. Such is true contrition, "not the sorrow of the world which worketh death, but the sorrow that worketh repentance not to be repented of." *Anon.*

4. *For my iniquities are gone over my head ; as a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me.* This is an amplification of the last words of the verse preceding. "The sense of my iniquities has now become intolerable." *Gone over*, literally, *passed*, *i.e.*, surpassed, exceeded, or transcended. *Too heavy for me*, or *heavier than I*, *i.e.*, heavier than I can bear. The reference is not merely to the effects of sin, but to the sense of sin itself, the consciousness of guilt, which he now associates with all his sufferings. *A.*—It is of singular use to us that the backslidings of the holy men of God are recorded in Holy Writ. Spots appear nowhere more disagreeable than when seen in a most beautiful face or on the cleanest garment. We also learn from them to think humbly of ourselves, to depend on the grace of God, to keep a stricter eye upon ourselves, lest perhaps we fall into the same or more grievous sins. *H. Witsius.*

8. The prayers of the saint are set forth in Scripture by calls and cries ; and sometimes by "strong cries with tears ;" sometimes again by "groanings not to be uttered." He who truly and sensibly knows the invaluable happiness of being delivered from temptation, and the unspeakable misery of sinking under it, will pray against it, as a man ready to starve would beg for bread, or a man sentenced to die would entreat for life. Every period, every word, every tittle of such a prayer is all spirit and life, flame and ecstasy ; it shoots from one heart into another, from the heart of him who utters to the heart of Him who hears it. *South.*

9. *Lord, before Thee (is) all my desire, and my sighing (or groaning) from Thee is not hid.* This is at once an asseveration that his account of his own sufferings was not exaggerated or fictitious, and a reason why it need not be continued. "Thou knowest, O Lord, what I ask and what I need, the depth of my necessities and the intensity of my desires." *A.*—The spirit of prayer has been produced and has been expressed in supplication ; and now that there is no restraint in prayer, give to me, work for me, respond according to Thy promise to the thirstings and to the longings of this heart. *S. Martin.*—The one gleam of comfort and refreshment in his misery ; the one bright ray which lights up the darkness ; the one thought which sustains him, that he may "unburden himself

of all his griefs in the bosom of God." We have but to read the first fourteen verses without this verse, to see how much blacker the night of suffering grows.

11. Up to this point he has spoken of his suffering as arising from his own state both of body and mind. He describes now its aggravation from the conduct of others ; first of friends who deserted him, and next of enemies who plotted against him. And this aggravation of his misery is again a fresh argument with God. *P.*

13. *And I, as a deaf (man), will not hear, and as a dumb (man) will not open his mouth.* This is at the same time an aggravation of his sufferings and a declaration of his patience under them. He is obliged to hear their calumnies and blasphemies as though he heard them not, being neither able to silence them nor willing to dispute them. *A.*

14. In the consciousness of his guilt he must be silent, and, refraining from all self-help, commit his cause to God. Consciousness of guilt and resignation close his mouth, so that he cannot and will not refute the false accusations of his enemies ; he has no rejoinders whereby to justify himself. *D.*—*No replies*, not here "reproofs" or "rebukes," but answers, in self-vindication, to the calumnies of his enemies. It was not that David could not, but that he would not, answer. In this, he was the type of a greater sufferer in a more august agony. *P.*

15. *Because for Thee I waited ; Thou wilt answer, Lord, my God !* His silence and forbearance, though a part of his sore trial, did not spring from weakness, but from faith in God, and submission to His precept. "I retorted not their calumnies and taunts, because I waited for Thee to vindicate my cause, and so Thou wilt, Thou wilt certainly answer." *A.*—David committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously, and so in patience was able to possess his soul. Hope in God's intervention and belief in the power of prayer are two most blessed stays to the soul in time of adversity. Turning away from the creature to the sovereign Lord of all, and to Him as our own covenant God, we shall find the richest solace in waiting upon Him. *S.*

18. In view of these afflictions I publicly confess my iniquity ; I deplore my sin—a vitally important part of true prayer in a case like this. *C.*

19. **But mine enemies are lively, and they are strong.** Neither the world, the flesh, nor the devil are ever afflicted with

debility or inertness ; this trinity of evils labor with mighty, unremitting energy to overthrow us. If the devil were sick, or our lusts feeble, or Madam Bubble infirm, we might slacken prayer ; but with such lively and vigorous enemies we must not cease to cry mightily unto our God. S.

22. Though pressed down with iniquities on his conscience, yet he had salvation in view, and the Lord of his salvation as his hope. O Lord, *my* salvation. Legal convictions only fill the soul with terror, drive it from God, and leave it in despair. Convictions from the Spirit, the Comforter, lead the soul to Christ ; and the faith, hope and cry of the soul will be after the help and salvation of Jesus *only* ; for He is “ the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.” *W. Mason.*—He who has the Lord on his side has salvation in present possession. Faith foresees the blessed issue of all her pleas, and in this verse begins to ascribe to God the glory of the expected mercy. We shall not be left of the Lord. A sense of sin shall melt into the joy of salvation ; grief shall lead on to gratitude, and gratitude to joy unspeakable and full of glory. S.

The Christian praises God for His justice, and yet fears Him for His mercy. He is so ashamed as that he dares not open his mouth before God ; and yet he comes with boldness to God and asks Him anything he needs. He is so humble as to acknowledge himself to deserve nothing but evil ; and yet believes that God means him all good. He is one that fears always, yet is as bold as a lion. He is often sorrowful, yet always rejoicing ; many times complaining, yet always giving of thanks. He is

the most lowly minded, yet the greatest aspirer ; most contented, yet ever craving. *Bacon.*

Every new man is two men ; every believer in Christ is what he was, and not what he was : the old nature and the new nature exist at the same time in each regenerate individual. The old nature the apostle calls a man, because it is a complete manhood after the image of fallen Adam ; it was the desires, the judgment, the mind, the thoughts, the language, and the action of man, as he is in his rebellious estate. He calls it the “ old man ” because it is as old as Eden’s first transgression ; it is as old as we are ; it is the nature born with us, the natural depravity, the fleshly mind which we inherited from our parents. Every Christian finds this old man still troubling him. He has a new nature which was implanted in him, as through the Spirit’s sacred working he was led to hate sin and believe in Jesus to his soul’s salvation. It is the heavenly offspring of the new birth, the pure and holy result of regeneration. That new nature cannot sin, it is as pure as the God from whom it came, and like the spark which seeks the sun, it aspires always after the holy God from whom it came ; its longings and its tendencies are always toward holiness and God, and it utterly hates and loathes that which is evil ; so that finding itself brought into contact with the old nature, it sighs and cries, as the apostle tells us, “ O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? ” Hence a warfare is set up within the believer’s bosom ; the new life struggles against the old death. The enmity is irreconcilable and lifelong. S.

PSALM XXXIX.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN, FOR JEDUTHUN. A PSALM OF DAVID.

1 I SAID, I will take heed to my ways,
That I sin not with my tongue :
I will keep my mouth with a bridle,
While the wicked is before me.
2 I was dumb with silence, I held my peace,
even from good ;
And my sorrow was stirred.
3 My heart was hot within me ;
While I was musing the fire kindled :
Then spake I with my tongue :

4 LORD, make me to know mine end,
And the measure of my days, what it
is ;
Let me know how frail I am.
5 Behold, thou hast made my days *as* hand-
breadths ;
And mine age is as nothing before thee :
Surely every man at his best estate is alto-
gether vanity [*Hebrew, a breath*].

[Selah

6 Surely every man walketh in a vain shew :
Surely they are disquieted in vain :
He heapeth up *riches*, and knoweth not who
shall gather them.

7 And now, LORD, what wait I for?
My hope is in thee.

8 Deliver me from all my transgressions :
Make me not the reproach of the foolish.

9 I was dumb, I opened not my mouth ;
Because thou didst it.

10 Remove thy stroke away from me :
I am consumed by the blow of thine hand.

11 When thou with rebukes dost correct man
for iniquity,

Thou makest his beauty to consume away
like a moth :

Surely every man is vanity. [Selah

12 Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto
my cry ;

Hold not thy peace at my tears :

For I am a stranger with thee,

A sojourner, as all my fathers were.

13 O spare me, that I may recover strength,
Before I go hence, and be no more.

THE Psalm consists of two parts : David's silence to men and his speech to God ; and both of them are set with such sweet notes of music, though they be sad, that they deserve well to be committed to the *chief musician*. *Leighton*.—"The most beautiful," says Ewald, "of all elegies in the Psalter." It is the sorrowful complaint of a heart not yet subdued to a perfect resignation, but jealous with a godly jealousy lest it should bring dishonor upon its God, and longing for light from heaven to scatter its doubts. The holy singer had long pent up his feelings ; and though busy thoughts were stirring within him, he would not give them utterance. And he feared lest, while telling his perplexities, some word might drop from his lips which would give the wicked an occasion to speak evil against his God. And when at last, unable to repress his strong emotion, he speaks, it is to God and not to man. It is as one who feels how hopeless the problem of life is, except as seen in the light of God. It is with the deep conviction of personal frailty (v. 6) and sinfulness (v. 9), as well as of the frailty and sinfulness of all men. It is with the touching sadness of one who cannot be comforted. And yet the weeping eye is raised to heaven, and amid all his grief and perplexity, notwithstanding all that is so dark and cheerless in the world, pilgrim and stranger as he is, the Psalmist can still say, "My hope is in Thee" (v. 7). P.

I. That I sin not with my tongue.

Man's mouth will hold a world full of sin ; for there is not any sin forbidden in the law or Gospel which is not spoken by the tongue, as well as thought in the heart or done in the life. *Reyner*.—How important it is that we should seek to order our speech aright, seeing that our words are the outcoming of our inmost heart, the revelation of the deepest, most hidden things which are there. How important, too, seeing that words reach so far and exercise so vast an influence. They have sometimes

been called "winged," and so they are, travelling far and fast by paths of their own. Consider the strict judgment and account to which God will call us for our use of this talent of speech. "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned ;" and from other sayings of Christ our Lord it is to be feared that many a light word, as it seems now, will prove heavy enough at the day of judgment ; many a word lightly spoken now will have to be heavily accounted for then. *Trench*.

2. *I held my peace, even from good*—that is, I forbore to speak what I might well and lawfully enough have spoken, lest some unseemly word might suddenly slip from me ; or lest mine enemies should misconstrue anything I spake. *A. Jackson*.—We do so easily exceed in our words, that it is better sometimes to be wholly silent than to speak that which is good ; for our good borders so near upon evil, and so easy is the transition from the one to the other, that though we begin to speak of God and good things with a good intention, yet how quickly run we into another channel ; passion and self having stolen in turn us quite from the first design of our speech. L.—It is a great art in the Christian life to learn to be silent. Under oppositions, rebukes, injuries, still to be silent. It is better to say nothing than to say it in an excited or angry manner, even if the occasion should seem to justify a degree of anger. By remaining silent, the mind is enabled to collect itself, and to call upon God in secret aspirations of prayer. And thus you will speak to the honor of your holy profession, as well as to the good of those who have injured you, when you speak from God. *Upham*.

3. The Psalmist here expresses a simple fact in the actual working of the human soul. It is that the fire of *feeling* is *fed* and maintained by reflection upon the objects or truths by which it has been kindled. "While I was musing the

fire kindled.” Emotion, desire, or passion is awakened by objects in the world around us, by events in providence, by the course of circumstances amid which we are placed, and by truths of nature or revelation read and apprehended by the mind ; and as feeling is thus excited, it is fed and made to burn simply by giving the mind fixedly to the contemplation of the things that have kindled it. B.

The fire of God’s truth and love lay like embers in his heart. By meditation he drew those embers together and fanned them into a flame. So should we do when our hearts are dark and cold. We know enough to make us wise and happy. Our failure is in not pondering what we know. *Interior.*—It is impossible that the affections should be kept constant to an object which gives no employment to the understanding. The energies of the intellect, increase of insight, and enlarging views are necessary to keep alive the substantial faith in the heart. They are the appointed fuel to the sacred fire. *Coleridge.*—It is the musing after which the fire begins to burn—the burning of our hearts within us as the words of wisdom enter the *listening ear*. Attention to sacred things is the method of the soul’s feeding on them. Through this it makes its approaches, its acquaintance with them, and through this dwells with them in a sort of heavenly conversation. H. H.

As meditation opens the understanding and presents truth to the mind, so it raiseth the affections. Knowledge without meditation to warm the affections is like the glancing of a beam upon a wave—it fills it with a little clarity, but it doth not heal it ; so, when there are many motions of truth in the brain, if meditation doth not apply them to the heart, and fix them upon the soul, the affections have no warmth by them. Slight visions make shallow impressions. He that with a careless eye looks upon a piece of embroidery does not see the curiousness of the work, and therefore doth not admire it. So when we with a running eye look upon the truths of the Gospel, no wonder our affections are not raised toward them. David, speaking concerning his meditation, says, “ While I was musing, the fire burned, my heart was hot within me.” ’Tis musing makes this fire to burn. *Salter.*—Our hearts and affections should answer our thoughts, as the echo the voice and the wax the character in the seal. If our meditations do not better our hearts, they do nothing. While they swim in the mind, as light things floating on the waters, they are unprofitable ; but when they sink down into the affections, as heavy and weighty things,

making suitable and real impressions there, then they attain their end. Our design in meditation must be rather to cleanse our hearts than to clear our heads. “ While I was musing the fire burned.” We strike fire by meditation to kindle our affections. This application of the thoughts to the heart is like the natural heat, which digests the food and turns it into good nourishment. *Swinnock.*

Meditation hath a double benefit in it, it pours in and pours out ; first it pours good thoughts into the mind, and then it pours out those thoughts again into prayer ; meditation first furnisheth with matter to pray and then it furnisheth with a heart to pray. “ *I was musing,*” said David, and the very next words are a prayer, “ *Lord, make me to know mine end.*” Prayer is the child of meditation. It was an excellent saying of Bernard : “ Lord, I will never come away from Thee without Thee.” Let this be a Christian’s resolution, not to leave off his meditations of God till he find something of God in him ; some moving of the soul after God. *T. Watson.*—In prayer, better that our heart be without words than our words without heart. H.

4. “ Make me rightly to know and estimate the shortness and uncertainty of human life, that so, instead of suffering myself to be perplexed with all that I see around me, I may cast myself the more entirely upon Thee,” as indeed follows : “ And now, Lord, what wait I for ?” P.

5. **My days.** Man’s life is styled *days* because it is not conferred upon us by wholesale, by months and years, but by retail of days, hours, minutes, moments ; so acquainting us with the brevity thereof, we may learn to depend upon God’s bounty for the *loan* of our life, employ it for His glory, and every day prepare for the Bridegroom, Christ. *Layfelde.*—**My days an handbreadth.** That is one of the shortest measures. We need not long lines to measure our lives by ; each one carries a measure about with him, his own hand ; that is the longest and fullest measure. It is not so much as a span ; that might possibly have been the measure of old age in the infancy of the world, but now it is contracted to a handbreadth, and that is the longest. But how many fall short of that ! Many attain not to a fingerbreadth ; multitudes pass from the womb to the grave ; and how many end their course within the compass of childhood ! *Leighton.*

Whether we drop in infancy from the cradle to the grave, or are cut off in youth ; whether we attain to manhood, or even to old age ; still

we soon arrive at the boundary, we soon reach the end of our course, and often without passing through its intermediate stages. "Behold, Thou hast made my days as an handbreadth, and mine age is as nothing before Thee!" The stream of human existence is rapid and impetuous; its waves follow each other in quick succession, and many are engulfed almost as soon as they appear. Early in infancy the stream glides away like a summer brook, and leaves the fond parent mournfully to recall the pleasure he received in contemplating its unsullied purity and its playful meanders. Of those who set out with us in this journey of life, how many have disappeared from our side! what changes have taken place in the circle of our connections since we began our course! how few can we now number of those with whom, in the earlier period of our lives, "we took sweet counsel!" Every year makes great changes. Many friends in whom we delighted have finished their course; they have passed through the gate that opens into the invisible world; they have completed their probation, and appeared at the tribunal of Infinite Majesty; they have done with the converse of mortals, and have seen and heard things which it is impossible to utter; they have forever finished their course. *R. Hall.*

Remember that our days do not come to us in a multitude, but in regulated succession, and with a largely educating variety. Though they come in succession, they make a unity, and they will make a beautiful and well-ordered unity if we live them all with God and for men. God is our home, and from that home in God what can our outlook be, even in the saddest days, but one of restful hope, quiet expectation, calm dependence on the exhaustless love of our Father in heaven, who has promised that "as our days, so shall our strength be"? *J. Clifford* — Life is so short, we must seek for wisdom to make the most of it. No more is required than that every man should do his best with the hours entrusted to his care. The thought of life's shortness should lead us to value time more highly. Our short life on earth should be a life of work, for we shall have all eternity to rest in. Learn to value time, first, because you have the work your "hand finds" to accomplish; and, secondly, because you have to "work out your own salvation." The great lesson which the frailty and shortness of life should teach us is the importance of preparing for the eternity beyond. *W. S. Randall.*

His best estate is altogether van-

ity. You have man here lifted up and cast down again: lifted up *man at his best estate*, and from that thrown down to nothing, even in that estate *he is altogether vanity*. What is that? It is, as the word signifies, *an earthly vapor*, and it is generally used to signify things of the least and meanest use, the most empty, airy things. So idols are oft called by that name; they are nothing in respect of what is attributed to them by the children of men; and such a thing is man, he seems to be something, and is indeed nothing. *Leighton.*

Selah is mentioned *seventy-four times* in the Scripture, whereof seventy-one in the Book of Psalms, and thrice in the prophet Habakkuk, which is written psalm-wise; and it is placed in the end of a Psalm or verse. It indicates a little pause, stop, or stay. It did instruct them to meditate seriously upon those themes where "Selah" was engraven, as containing matter worthy of singular observation, meditation, and remembrance. *Layfelde.*

6. *Only in an image does a man walk; only (for) a breath do they make a noise; he hoards up and he knows not who will gather them.* So short and transient is man's life, that what he does and what befalls him seems to be not so much a reality as a show, a picture, an ideal scene, in which he *walks about*, as one of the imaginary actors. *For a breath, i.e.,* the time spent in a single respiration, an instant, a moment. *Or as a breath, i.e.,* something intangible and momentary. *Or as vanity, vainly, in vain, without use or effect.* A.

The apostle says (1 Cor. 7:31), "The fashion of this world passeth away," the outward form and show of things, that which *appears* as the substance of this life, its possessions, enjoyments, interests, are changing, fleeting, and disappearing with every moment. The form, the fashion of the world, like a splendid pageant is unreal, illusive, continues but a little time. It passes off like the shifting scenes of the stage, with its gay masked actors of the hour. Briefly but exactly is the apostle's thought here expressed by the Psalmist, "Surely man walketh in a *vain show*." B. — Life is but a passing pageant. This alone is sure, that nothing is sure. All around us shadows mock us; we walk among them, and too many live for them as if the mocking images were substantial; acting their borrowed parts with zeal fit only to be spent on realities, and lost upon the phantoms of this passing scene. S.

It is a dreaming and distracted world, that spend their days and cares for nothing; and

are as serious in following a feather, and in the pursuit of that which they confess is vanity, and dying in their hands, as if, indeed, they knew it to be true felicity. Like a stage-play, where all things seem to be what they are not, and all parties seem to do what they do not, and depart, and are all disrobed and unmasked; such is the life of the most of this world, who spend their days in a serious jesting and in a busy doing of nothing. *Barter*.—Will a man find fittest preparation for calmness, and nobleness, and purity in the everlasting kingdom by giving *all* his actual energies and *all* his time in this world to these earthly, transient things? Can he be in the highest sense really succeeding by comporting himself like a settled and permanent proprietor, or like one who has hope that in time he will come into secure possession, in a place and scene where nothing is fixed, where nothing is sure, and where all the wisest and all the noblest have said, “We are strangers”? *Raleigh*.

Surely they are disquieted in vain.

Men fret, and fume, and worry, and all for mere nothing. They are shadows pursuing shadows, while death pursues them. He who toils and contrives and wearies himself for gold, for fame, for rank, even if he wins his desire, finds at the end his labor lost; for like the treasure of the miser’s dream, it all vanishes when the man awakes in the world of reality. Read well this text, and then listen to the clamor of the market and the exchange, the din of the city streets, and remember that all this *noise* (for so the word means), this breach of quiet, is made about unsubstantial, fleeting vanities. Broken rest, anxious fear, overworked brain, failing mind—these are steps in the process of disquieting with many, and all for riches, which a man must leave so soon. **He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.**

Many work for others all unknown to them. Especially does this verse refer to those all-gathering muckrakes, who in due time are succeeded by all-scattering forks, which scatter riches as profusely as their sires gathered them parsimoniously. *S*.—*Heaping up riches* is the great foolishness and disease, especially of old age, that the less way a man has to go he makes the greater provision for it. But for what end dost thou take all this pains? If for thyself a little sober care will do thy turn, if thy desires be sober; and if not so, thy diligence were better bestowed in impairing and diminishing of these desires, and that is the easier way a great deal. And if it be for others, why dost thou take a certain unease to

thyself for the uncertain ease of others? And who these are thou dost not know; maybe such as thou never intended them for. *L*.

It is one of the paradoxes of human nature that while men are young and have no money to spend, they are fond of *spending*; but as they get older, richer, and have little further use of money, then they are prone to hoard it. Thus when expediency would suggest the need of money for the many rainy days of the probable long future before him man is careless so to make it; but when, as common-sense must tell him, he is soon to die and leave his wealth, then he is anxious to hoard it. *S. R*.—Many covetous men take a great deal of pleasure in ruminating upon their wealth, and in recounting what they have; but they have a great deal of tormenting care and fear about it, and if they had not, it is very hard to understand where the reasonable pleasure and happiness lies of having things to no end. It is, at the best, as if it were worth the while for men to take pains to dig silver out of the earth, for no other purpose but to melt it down and stamp it, and bury it there again. *Tillotson*.—What can be more miserable than for a man to toil and labor his whole life, and to have no power to enjoy any fruit of his labors? to bear like an ass a golden burden all the day, and, without any further use of it, at night to have it taken away, reserving nothing to himself but a galled conscience? *Downame*.

Christ’s teaching about wealth (Luke 16 : 19) is not communist or socialist. He recognizes fully the right of individual possession; but He emphatically asserts that possession is stewardship, and that we hold money, as we do everything, in trust for those who lack and need it. The belief and practice of that would revolutionize society, and we should have no more rich men dying in the odor of sanctity, and renowned for their liberality to the cause of God and men, while leaving behind them millions. Our modern Christianity is far too chary in giving full weight and prominence to our Lord’s plain and reiterated teachings to that effect. It needs to be preached more emphatically, and to be burned into men’s consciences. *A. M*.

7. And now. He turns away with a sense of relief from the sad contemplation of man’s fleeting, transitory life, to fix the eye of his heart on Him who abideth ever. We seem almost to hear the deep sigh with which the words are uttered. It is remarkable that even here it is on God Himself, not on a life to come, that his hope sustains itself. “Although not expressly assured of a future life of blessedness,

his faith, even in the midst of death, lays hold on Jehovah as the living one, and as the God of the living. It is just this which, as Hengstenberg also here observes, is so heroic in the Old Testament faith, that in the midst of the riddles of the present, and in view of a future, losing itself in a night of gloom, it casts itself absolutely and without hesitation into the arms of God" (*Delitzsch*). P.

My hope is in Thee. Does this imply hope in a state after death? If not, the state of mind is one very hard to understand. The one thing David is sure of is that his life here is a mere nothing, a shadow, an empty sound; the hope must therefore have another object. The Psalmist does not openly declare what it was. He was not moved to reveal it; but here, as in numberless other passages, he leaves no alternative but utter disappointment, unless the hope in death is realized hereafter. *Cook*.

In Thee. Sweet is it that our hope should rest in Him who is never shaken; should abide in Him who never changeth; should bind us to Him who can hold us fast to Himself, who alone is the full contentment of the soul; should, as it were, enter into Him; since "*in Him is our being*," who is love. *Pusey*.—Verily, the heavenly instructed soul knows that all is of God by Jesus Christ; and therefore God alone is his hope. His hope is not in his graces, his feelings, his frames, his comforts, but in the God of all grace; not in the streams, but in the fountain; not in what he has received, but in the infinite fulness which is treasured up in Christ. *W. Mason*.

8. Deliver me. The first thing David prays for is deliverance from the sin to which he attributes all his misery. He includes inward assurance of forgiveness, cleansing from the guilt, and deliverance from the power and penalty of sin. *Cook*.

9. I was dumb. This clearly refers to the resolve and conduct described in vs. 1, 2. He thus reiterates before God how careful he had been to avoid giving offence by any hasty word; alleges the reason for this, because he felt that his suffering was God's doing; and urges it as a motive with God in the entreaty which follows. P.

Because Thou didst it. A great deal is gained when the sorrow or the mystery has been traced up to God. God did it; then I know that *infinite wisdom* did it. God did it; then I know that *infinite power* did it. God did it, and therefore I know that *infinite love* did it. The fact, indeed, reduces us to silence; but let us be sure that we understand the mean-

ing of the hand that is laid for the time over our mouth. It need not mean that God is rebuking our inquiry, or forbidding us to pursue it. It *cannot* mean that God is tantalizing us. It need not even mean that He intends to deny us a solution. It may mean that He is putting us in the way of a solution. Often, in the presence of our sorrows or our hard questions, we are like this Psalmist—our heart hot within us, our mind in a ferment of wild questionings. The best thing for God to do with us then is to silence us, and to set us pondering this naked truth: *God did it!* We may think, perhaps, His reducing us to silence is an arbitrary refusal to enlighten us; but we may possibly discover, after we have been silent awhile, that a better and ampler explanation lies in the words: "Thou didst it!" . . . No man ever *reasoned* himself into submission under God's stroke or into restfulness amid His mysteries. The child's way is the only way, going direct to Him who did it, and resting in silence on His Divine heart. And how this truth gathers power when we go to this text, taking Christ with us! How it kindles under His touch! God did it; and I look up into that face of unspeakable love, with its thorn-marked brow, and say, "Thou didst it." I am in sorrow; the sorrow is driven home by a pierced hand: Thou didst it; but the pierced hand tells me of the loving heart behind the hand; and if love hath done it let me be silent and content. *Vincent*.

God is training up His children here. This is the true character of His dealings with them. It is training for the kingdom; it is education for eternity. It is the discipline of love. Every step of it is kindness. There is no wrath nor vengeance in any part of the process. The discipline of the school may be stern; but that of the family is love. We are sure of this; and the consolation which it affords is unutterable. There will be no needless suffering. Were this but kept in mind, there would be fewer hard thoughts of God among men, even when His strokes are most severe. *II. Bonar*.—So let us be dumb, dumb not from despair, but from faith; dumb not like a wretch weary with calling for help that does not come, but dumb like a child sitting at its mother's feet, looking up into her face and watching her doings, understanding none of them as yet, but certain that they all are done in love. *C. Kingsley*.

There is too much noise around us, and we cannot hear the voice of God as long as all is well with us and we have the enjoyment of life. Every affliction is a wilderness in which a man is in solitude and stillness so that he under-

stands better the Word of God. When human voices are silent, the voice of God begins to speak. *Tholuck*. — Patience will not have had its perfect work in any case until the afflicted soul is prepared to make no reservation, to claim no direction, but to give up all into the hands of the most wise, most righteous and merciful God. Murmuring may for a time prevail, yet the Great Physician, who applies the painful remedy, cannot be baffled, and triumphs to His own glory and the unspeakable benefit of the believer's soul. Happy is he who, like David, can look back upon chastisements and say, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because Thou didst it." J. W. A.

Resignation, with a kind of spiritual alchemy, transmuteth every sorrow and grief into a blessing. She makes the bitter waters of Marah delicious; she sings with heavenly music and melodious voice her songs in the night; she overcomes all by subjection to all; and though noiselessly treading the path of meekness, she moves on with calm, majestic order, in company with all creatures, and all worlds, that obey Jehovah's bidding. Abasing herself, she riseth to high exaltation; submissive, she conquers; sorrowing, she rejoiceth; dying, she liveth; consumed by fiery trials, she ascendeth from the ashes of her affliction to a nobler and better life. *Jabez Burns*.

10. Remove Thy stroke from me.

It is quite consistent with resignation to pray for the removal of a trial. David was fully acquiescent in the Divine will, and yet found it in his heart to pray for deliverance; indeed, it was while he was rebellious that he was prayerless about his trial, and only when he became submissive did he plead for mercy. S.

11. Like a moth. The moths of the East are very large and beautiful, but short-lived. After a few showers these splendid insects may be seen fluttering in every breeze, but the dry weather and their numerous enemies soon consign them to the common lot. Thus the beauty of man consumes away like that of this gay rover, dressed in his robes of purple, and scarlet, and green. *Kitto*. — **Surely every man is vanity.** He is as Trapp wittily says "a curious picture of nothing." He is unsubstantial as his own breath, a vapor which appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away. *Seluh*. Well may this truth bring us to a pause. S.

12. Lord, hold not Thy peace at my tears. He that does not willingly afflict and grieve the children of men, much less His own children, will not hold His peace at their

tears, but will either speak deliverance for them (and if He speak, it is done), or in the meantime speak comfort to them, and make them to hear joy and gladness. H. — **A stranger,** or passing guest; a sojourner and not a native. **As all my fathers.** As the patriarchs had been in the land which was theirs only by promise, he himself, he felt, and all men were on the earth what Abraham was in the land of promise; he could not call one foot of it his own. P. — The stranger is one who is merely a guest for a season, the sojourner one who lives as a client, under the protection and patronage of a prince or noble; neither has any right nor settled footing in the land. The earth is not the home of man. An image which is at once humbling and suggestive of a sure hope. *Cook*.

The mere conviction of the brevity and hollowness of life is not in itself a religious or a helpful thought. The connection in which it is held determines whether it shall be a blight or a blessing to a man. And the one addition which is needed to incline the whole weight of that conviction to the better side, and to light up all its blackness, is that little phrase in this text, "I am a stranger *with Thee*, and a sojourner." If these poor brief hours are spent in the great "Taskmaster's eye"—if the shadow cast on earth proclaims a light in the heavens—if from this point there hangs an unending chain of conscious being—oh, then, with what awful solemnity is the brevity, with what tremendous magnitude is the minuteness of our earthly days invested! "With Thee"—then I am constantly in the presence of a sovereign law and its Giver; "with Thee"—then all my actions are registered and weighed yonder; "with Thee"—then "Thou, God, seest me." It is the prismatic halo and ring of eternity round this poor glass of time that gives it all its dignity, all its meaning. The lives that are lived before God cannot be trifles. And if this relation to time be recognized and accepted and held fast by our hearts and minds, then what calm blessedness will flow into our souls!

"A stranger with Thee"—then we are the guests of the King. The Lord of the land charges Himself with our protection and provision; we journey under His safe conduct. It is for His honor and faithfulness that no harm shall come to us travelling in His territory, and relying on His Word. "A stranger with Thee"—then we have a constant companion and an abiding presence. Companionships may dissolve and warm hands grow cold and their close clasp relax—what then? He is with us still.

He will join us as we journey, even when our hearts are sore with loss. He will walk with us by the way, and make our chill hearts glow. He will sit with us at the table—however humble the meal, and He will not leave us when we discern Him. Strangers we are indeed here—but not solitary, for we are “strangers with Thee.” And this blessed relationship with God is in itself a prophecy of a more perfect communion and a heavenly house. They who are strangers with Him will one day be at “home with the Lord.” And in the light of that blessed hope the transiency of this life changes its whole aspect, loses the last trace of sadness, and becomes a solemn joy. Lives rooted in God through faith in Jesus Christ are not vanity. Let us lay hold of Him with a loving grasp—and “we shall live also” *because* He lives, *as* He lives, *so long* as He lives. The brief days of earth will be blessed while they last, and fruitful of what shall never pass. We shall have Him with us while we journey—and all our journeyings will lead to rest in Him. A. M.

13. The *subject* of his petition, not that he may escape death and live always in this life, because he knows that he must go hence; but that he may be recovered from his afflictions, and that he may continue longer in this life.

Such a prayer is lawful when offered in submission to the will of God. The *reasons* for this petition. That he may remove by his future life the calumnies that had been heaped upon him. That he may have brighter evidences of his interest in the Divine favor. That he may become a blessing to others, his family and nation. *G. Rogers.*—The Christian prays to be spared above all that he may do more for God, for his fellow-men. He knows that lengthened days, unless they serve these ends, can be no boon at all. *R. Duckworth.*

A wanderer indeed he is, and a transient guest on earth; but what of that, if he be God's guest? All that is sorrowful is drawn off from the thought when we realize our connection with God. We are in God's house; the host, not the guest, is responsible for the house-keeping. We need not feel life lonely if He be with us, nor its shortness sad. It is not a shadow, a dream, a breath, if it be rooted in Him. And thus the sick man has conquered his gloomy thoughts, even though he sees little before him but the end; and he is not cast down even though his desires are all summed up in one for a little respite and healing, ere the brief trouble of earth be done with: “O spare me, that I may recover strength before I go hence, and be no more.” A. M.

PSALM XL.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN. A PSALM OF DAVID.

1 I WAITED patiently for the LORD;
And he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.
2 He brought me up also out of an horrible
pit, out of the miry clay;
And he set my feet upon a rock, and estab-
lished my goings.
3 And he hath put a new song in my mouth,
even praise unto our God:
Many shall see it, and fear,
And shall trust in the LORD.
4 Blessed is the man that maketh the LORD
his trust,
And respecteth not the proud, nor such as
turn aside to lies.
5 Many, O LORD my God, are the wonderful
works which thou hast done,
And thy thoughts which are to us-ward:
They cannot be set in order unto thee;

If I would declare and speak of them,
They are more than can be numbered.
6 Sacrifice and offering thou hast no delight
in;
Mine ears hast thou opened:
Burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not
required.
7 Then said I, Lo, I am come;
In the roll of the book it is written of
me:
8 I delight to do thy will, O my God;
Yea, thy law is within my heart.
9 I have published righteousness in the great
congregation;
Lo, I will not refrain my lips,
O LORD, thou knowest.
10 I have not hid thy righteousness within my
heart;

- I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation :
- I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.
- 11 Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD :
- Let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me.
- 12 For innumerable evils have compassed me about,
Mine iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to look up ;
They are more than the hairs of mine head, and my heart hath failed me.
- 13 Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me :
Make haste to help me, O LORD.
- 14 Let them be ashamed and confounded together
That seek after my soul to destroy it :
Let them be turned backward and brought to dishonour
That delight in my hurt.
- 15 Let them be desolate by reason of their shame
That say unto me, Aha, Aha.
- 16 Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee :
Let such as love thy salvation say continually,
The LORD be magnified.
- 17 But I am poor and needy ;
Yet the LORD thinketh upon me :
Thou art my help and my deliverer ;
Make no tarrying, O my God.

THIS Psalm consists of two parts. The first (vs. 1-10) tells the story of God's mercies in a former time of trouble ; the second (vs. 11-18) is a cry for the like help and deliverance, now that fresh calamities are come. The writer, looking back to the past, tells how he had been brought into the deepest abyss of misery ; he had been like one falling into a pit, or sinking in a deep morass, where there was no resting-place for his feet ; but God of His great mercy had heard him when he cried, had delivered him from his trouble, had set his feet on a rock, and established his goings ; and not only had He done this, but He had also given him a heart and a tongue to praise Him (v. 3). Then follows the expression of his feelings at the time. Here, after speaking of the blessedness of trusting in Jehovah, and of the wonders of His goodness, not only to the singer himself, but to all Israel, he further declares what had been the great lesson of his affliction—how he had learned that there was a better sacrifice than that of bulls and goats, even the sacrifice of an obedient will ; and how, moreover, he had found that this truth which God had opened his ears to receive (v. 6) was in most perfect harmony with the truth taught in the written law (v. 7) ; and lastly, how, constrained by a sense of gratitude, he had published to "the great congregation" the lovingkindness and truth of the Lord.

In the second division of the Psalm he pleads the past, and his own conduct in the past, as a ground for renewed mercies being vouchsafed to him, now that he is in fresh trouble, bowed down by the burden of his sins (v. 9), and cruelly pursued by his enemies (v. 14). Thrice

he prays earnestly for himself (vs. 11, 13, 17) ; the last time, faith having vanquished in the struggle, there mingles with the cry for help the touching expression of confidence in God : "But as for me, miserable and helpless though I be, the Lord thinketh upon me." With these personal petitions are joined others against the malice of his enemies (vs. 14, 15), and intercession on behalf of all those who, like himself, love and seek Jehovah. This second part, or rather the portion of it from v. 13 to v. 17, appears again, in an independent form, as Psalm 70. But it is, I think, almost certain that the Psalm in its present form is the original, and the latter verses were subsequently detached and slightly altered, in order to form a distinct poem. P.

1. The words "patient," "patiently," have chiefly lost their original meaning in English, and a secondary one has become the primary. "Patient," from the Latin "*patiens*," originally meant a sufferer. The doctor's "patient" holds this idea still ; and we also speak of Christ's "passion," not as we speak of a passionate man, but purely in the old sense of His suffering. But in almost all connections we drop the old idea of suffering, and think only of quiet endurance, longsuffering, making prominent the idea of quietness and self-control. In our passage we must go back to the original sense *suffer*. "I waited sufferingly, intensely, with earnest longings, an intensity of feeling which amounted to real suffering." This was what our translators meant to express, and according to the usage of their times did express. The Hebrew idiom also gives the idea of intense waiting, a longing, which involved

very strong emotion. C.—Patience is the spirit and demeanor of the living martyr trusting in the Word and faithfulness of God. It is the serenity of the soul amid the fiercest storms of trial and calamity, as well as the brightest days of sunshine and happiness. It is an unruffled sea in all winds; a thread even spun with every wheel of providence; a sufferer neither without tears nor without hope; neither murmuring nor presuming; neither despising chastisement nor fainting when corrected; affected with all, cast down with nothing; quiet when tossed, very quiet when extremely tossed; expecting his salvation from God when none can be had from man. “Here is the patience of the saints.” *R. Bond.*

How reasonable it is that we wait! He is a King well worth waiting on; and there is in the very waiting on Him an honor and happiness far above us. And the things we seek are great: forgiveness of sins, evidence of sonship and heirship; heirship of a kingdom; and we condemned rebels. Further, the attendance that this reason enforces is sweetened by the consideration of His wisdom and love, that He hath foreseen and chosen the very hour for each mercy fit for us, and will not slip it a moment. Never any yet repented their waiting, but found it fully recompensed with the opportune answer in such a time as then they are forced to confess was the only best. *I waited patiently,* says the Psalmist, but it was all well bestowed, *He inclined to me and heard my cry;* and then he afterward falls into admiration of the Lord’s method, *His wonderful workings and thoughts to usward.* L.

Some prayers are not answered at the time, because those who offer them have to be taught the grace of waiting patiently for the Lord; they have to learn more fully to walk by faith, not by sight; they have to learn to take the promise of God against all appearances, and to remember that heaven and earth shall pass away, but God’s word shall not pass away. But whatever be the reasons for the apparent silence of God, we may rest assured that hearing prayer is the law of His kingdom. Old Testament and New alike bear witness to this. Every verse of the Psalms proclaims it. Alike by precept and example our Lord constantly enforced it. Every apostle takes up the theme and urges the duty and the privilege. W. G. B.

The same spirit of faith which teaches a man to cry earnestly teaches him to wait patiently; for, as it assures him the mercy is in the Lord’s hand, so it assures him it will be given forth in the Lord’s time. Whatever you want, go to

God by faith and prayer in the name of Christ, and never think His delays are denials. And be assured that all who spend their days in faith and prayer shall end their days in peace and comfort. *J. Mason.*

2. Jehovah placed his feet upon a rock and made his steps firm, *i.e.*, delivered him from the danger that surrounded him and gave him firm ground under his feet. The high rock and the firm steps are the opposite of the deep pit and the yielding, miry bottom. This deliverance became to him new matter for thanksgiving. D.—Do but call back your thoughts, you that have indeed escaped it, and look but into that misery whence the hand of the Lord hath drawn you out, and you cannot miss to love Him highly, and still kiss that gracious hand even while it is scourging you with any affliction whatsoever; because it hath once done this for you—namely, plucked you out of destruction. The thoughts of this change will teach us to praise. L.

3. **A new song.** Put off oldness; ye know the new song. A new man, a New Testament, a new song. A new song belongeth not to men that are old; none learn that but new men, renewed through grace from oldness, and belonging now to the New Testament, which is the kingdom of heaven. *Augustine.*—The soul is now entered into rest; rest in love, rest in God. It is flooded also with a wondrously luminous joy; its whole horizon is filled with light; the light of a new love, the light of God revealed within. It has the beginning of true blessedness; because God Himself and the principle of God’s own blessedness are in it. It settles into peace; for now it is at one with God and all the creatures of God. It is filled with the confidence of hope; because God, who is wholly given Himself to a right love, will never forsake it, in life or death. It is free to good, inclined to good; for the good love reigns in it, and it would even have to deny itself not to do the works of love. It consciously knows God within; for God is there now in a new relation, love present to love, love answering to love. There is no alienation, or separation, but oneness. If a man love Me, says the Saviour, he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him. That abode in the soul is a new condition of Divine movement; for it is in the movement of God. All things, of course, are new. Life proceeds from a new centre, of which God is the rest and prop. The Bible is a new book, because there is a light in the soul by which to read it. Duties

are new, because the Divine love the soul is in has changed all the relations of time and the aims of life. The saints of God on earth are no longer shunned, but greeted in new terms of celestial brotherhood. The very world itself is revealed in new beauty and joy to the mind, because it is looked upon with another and different love, and beheld as the symbol of God. *Bushnell.*

Coming to Christ and conversion to God are materials for a "new song." A good hope when first given is a new song; and this good hope when renewed, when made more alive and effectual, is a new song. Grand and glorious new songs are in our future. There is the song of victory over death. The first moment after death will put a new song in our mouth, and as certainly—more certainly—our entrance to heaven will do the same. Let us go through life with songs. Let us sing that which God gives us to sing. In plain words, let us acknowledge our obligations to "the Father of all mercies" and the God of all consolation; and let us so acknowledge them as to awaken praise to our God. We are all called to be singers, and we are called to sing new songs. *S. Martin.*

After deliverance should come a song that will communicate its melody to the life. We can set our daily deeds to the music of a grateful heart, and seek to round our lives into a hymn—the melody of which will be recognized by all who come into contact with us, and the power of which shall not be evanescent, like the voice of the singer, but perennial, like the music of the spheres. Only they who carry this music in their hearts shall sing at last, on the shore of the heavenly land, that song of "pure concert" for which John could find no better description than that it was "the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb." *W. M. Taylor.*

Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord. The terms *fear*, and *hope*, or *trust* David has not improperly joined together, for no man will ever entertain the *hope* of the favor of God but he whose mind is first imbued with the *fear* of God. I understand *fear* to mean the feeling of piety which is produced in us by the knowledge of the power, equity, and mercy of God. *Calvin.*

4. *Happy the man who has made Jehovah his trust.* From his own experience he draws a general conclusion as to the safety and prosperity of those who trust in God. The phrase is properly an exclamation, *oh, the happiness of the man*, as Ps. 1 : 1 ; 2 : 12 ; 32 : 1 ; 33 : 12. A.

[What *trust* (the Old Testament word) or *faith* (the word of the New Testament) is and does, as summarized by old writers : B.]

Faith is the eye, the mouth, the hand, and one of these is of use all day long. Faith is to see, to receive, to work, or to eat; and a Christian should be seeing, or receiving, or working, or feeding, all day long. *Bunyan.*—Faith is an assimilating grace; it changeth the soul into the image of the object. A deformed person may look on a beautiful object, but not be made beautiful; but faith looking on Christ transforms a man, and turns him into His similitude. Faith looking on a bleeding Christ, causeth a soft, bleeding heart; looking on an holy Christ, causeth sanctity of heart; looking on an humble Christ, makes the soul humble. *T. Watson.*—Faith reasons not with God, asketh no whats, no hows, no wherefores; it moveth no questions. It yields assent and humbly says *Amen* to every word of God. *Clarke.*—Faith is that nail which fastens the soul to Christ; and love is that grace that drives the nail to the head. Faith takes hold of Him and love helps to keep the grip. Christ dwells in the heart by faith, and He burns in the heart by love, like a fire melting the breast. Faith casts the knot, and love draws it fast. *Erskine.*

5. Much hast Thou accomplished, Jehovah my God, of Thy marvels and thoughts for us;

There is nothing to be compared unto Thee, Else would I declare and discourse of them— They are too numerous to be recounted. D.

My God, as well as *our God*, i.e., in personal covenant with me, as well as in national covenant with Israel. The word translated *wonders* is properly a passive participle, meaning (*things*) *made wonderful* or *wonderfully done*, and therefore constantly used absolutely as a noun in the sense of *wondrous deeds* or *wonderful works*. *Thoughts*, purposes, and in this connection, purposes of mercy. *To us*, toward us, respecting us, and for our benefit. A.

There are works of God in His people and for His people. There are His works of creation, of providence, and of redemption, and also His works of grace, wrought in them by His Spirit, and around them by His providence, as well as for them by His Son. *These are wonderful works*; wonderful in their variety, their tenderness, their adaptation to their need, their co-operation with outward means and their power. *They are the result of the Divine thoughts respecting us.* They come not by chance, not by men, but by the hand of God, and that hand is moved by His will, and that will by His thought re-

specting us. Every mercy, even the least, represents some kind thought in the mind of God respecting us. God thinks of each one of His people, and every moment. They are innumerable. "*They cannot be reckoned up.*" Could we see all the mercies of God to us and His wonderful works wrought for us individually, they would be countless as the sands, and all these countless mercies represent countless thoughts in the mind and heart of God to each one of His people. *G. Rogers.*

6. He proceeds now to declare the great truth which God had taught him, and which it would seem he had learned in his affliction, that God desires the sacrifice of the will rather than the sacrifice of slain beasts. We may, perhaps, paraphrase vs. 5-8 as follows: My heart is full to overflowing with the thought of Thy goodness. How can I express, how can I acknowledge it? Once I should have thought sacrifices and offerings a proper and sufficient acknowledgment. Now I feel how inadequate these are; for Thou hast taught me the truth; my deaf, unwilling ears didst Thou open, that I might understand that a willing heart was the best offering I could render. Then, being thus taught of Thee, I said, Lo, I come, presenting myself before Thee, not with a dead and formal service, but with myself as a living sacrifice. The truth here inculcated is stated fully in Psalm 50, and is often insisted on by the prophets. *P.*

The connection of the thoughts is quite clear: great and many are the tokens of Thy grace; how am I to thank Thee for them? To this question he first of all gives a negative answer; God has no pleasure in external sacrifices. God, says David, desires not outward sacrifices, but obedience; He hath formed the sense of hearing, hath bestowed upon me the faculty of hearing, and hath therewith given me instruction to be obedient. What is meant is that God has granted him ears in order to hear God's Word in general and to obey what was heard. It is not sacrifice that God desires, but hearing ears and, therefore, the surrender of the personality itself in willing obedience. *D.*—Sacrifice is outward and formal, so far as the worshipper is concerned. Obedience is inward and real. The affection of the heart alone gives life to the observance of the form. Without the former, the latter is worthless to the worshipper. This is the uniform tenor of Scripture. *M.*

In this famous passage David expresses with singular beauty the great truth that all outward observances are valueless without obedience and a full concurrence of the will of man

with the will of God. This had ever been recognized by the teachers of Israel, and had but a few years previously been declared by Samuel (see 1 Sam. 15:22). It is repeated by David (Psalm 51:16), by Asaph (50:8-15), and by the prophets (*e.g.*, Isa. 1:11-17; Hos. 6:6; Micah 6:6-8). Four kinds of offerings are here named: two represent the conditions of entering into covenant with God—viz., sacrifice, the slaughter of a victim, and oblation, *mincha*, the fine flour with oil and frankincense presented at the same time on the altar. To these David contrasts the "opening of the ears." A natural and obvious interpretation is, that God has opened the Psalmist's ears, or, more accurately, made new ears for him, given him the faculty of receiving and understanding His law. The hearing ear, the legal equivalent to evangelical faith, is the first condition of inner communion with God, and as such presents a perfect antithesis to the outward form which merely represents the condition.

7, 8. The typical application to our Lord is obvious and very striking. As David presented himself before God in spirit with the book of the law describing his duties and rights, so the Saviour came with the Word of God bearing witness to Him and expressing that will which He fulfilled. *Cook.*—The Epistle to the Hebrews (10:5-10), following the LXX., takes these verses as the language of the Christ upon His coming into the world. When we look at the second half of the Psalm, there cannot be the slightest doubt that it was typological reasons that gave rise to such an interpretation. The language of David, the anointed one—but only such as was used by him after he found himself on the way to the throne—is so moulded by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of prophecy, that it sounds at the same time like the language of the second David, whose self-sacrifice is the end of the animal sacrifices and whose person and work are the kernel and star of the roll of the law, as He passed on through suffering to glory. *D.*

The purpose of the writer to the Hebrews is not so much to insist on the fact that our Lord's sacrifice was the sacrifice of a human body—that was already implied in His "coming into the world," His incarnation—but that it was the offering of an obedient will. It should also further be observed, that the words are not quoted as a prophecy which was fulfilled in Christ, but the writer finds words which once expressed the devotion of a true Israelite to be far more strikingly expressive, indeed, in their highest sense, only truly expressive, of the per-

fect obedience of the Son of God. All true words of God's saints of old, all high and holy aspirations, however true and excellent in their mouths, went far beyond themselves, and found their perfect consummation only in Him who was the Perfect Man. P.

The clause before us may be paraphrased as follows: "Since the ceremonies of the Law are worthless, when divorced from habitual obedience, instead of offering mere sacrifice I offer myself, to do whatever is prescribed to me in the written revelation of Thy will." This is the spirit of every true believer, and is therefore perfectly appropriate to the whole class to whom this Psalm relates, and for whom it was intended. It is peculiarly significant, however, when applied to Christ; first, because He alone possessed this spirit in perfection; secondly, because He sustained a peculiar relation to the rites, and more especially the sacrifices of the Law. David, or any other individual believer under the old economy, was bound to bring himself as an oblation, in completion or in lieu of his external gifts; but such self-devotion was peculiarly important upon Christ's part, as the real sacrifice, of which those rites were only figures. The failure of any individual to render this essential offering ensured his own destruction. But if Christ had failed to do the same, all His followers must have perished. It is not, therefore, an accommodation of the passage to a subject altogether different, but an exposition of it in its highest application, that is given in Heb. 10: 5-10. The limitation of the words to Christ, as an exclusive Messianic prophecy, has the twofold inconvenience of forbidding its use by the large class of godly sufferers, for whom it seems so admirably suited, and of requiring us to understand even the confession of sins as uttered in His person. A.

That the Psalm was not intended purely as a prophecy of Christ is plain from v. 12, which cannot be attributed to Him. It was written to express David's grateful and devout feelings, but not his individual feelings alone, those which he had in common with all the truly pious. As such, it could properly be adopted by God's incarnate Son. David says, it is not the sacrifice of animals that God demands, but the voluntary consecration of the person and hearty surrender to the will of God. Such surrender found its first perfect embodiment in Christ; His, therefore, according to the doctrine of David, is the true and only perfect sacrifice. David, indeed, is here speaking of but one aspect of sacrifice, as symbolizing a grate-

ful return to God for His benefits. But sacrifice, as the Scriptures abundantly teach, has also another aspect, that of expiation for sin. Now if Christ's sacrifice, tested by the principle which David here lays down, is the only perfect sacrifice, then the further conclusion follows that it is the one only complete expiation, beside which animal offerings are worthless, and by which they are necessarily superseded. The use made of this passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews is, therefore, entirely legitimate; while the conclusion drawn is not one which was in the Psalmist's mind in penning the passage, it nevertheless is involved in the declaration which he makes. W. H. G.

7. Emphatic and important are the words: "Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of Me." The Messiah was long known under the name "*the coming One*," "He that should come"—phrases which have their germ in this and kindred prophecies. "In the volume of the book," *i.e.*, in the Pentateuch (no other book then extant bore this title) it was written: "The sceptre shall not pass from Judah until Shiloh *come*" (Gen. 49: 10). So here it is written concerning Me, *i.e.*, that I am to come, and devote myself to doing the perfect will of God, even though at the cost of untold sufferings. C.

Lo, I come. As His name is above every name, so this coming of His is above every coming. We sometimes call our own births a coming into the world; but properly, none ever came into the world but He. He only truly can be said to come, who is before He comes; so were not we, only He so. He only properly comes who comes from some place or other. Alas! we had none to come from but the womb of nothing. *He* only had a place to be in before He came. *Mark Frank.*

This looks back to the primitive transaction and purpose, *Lo, I come to do Thy will*, says the Son; and, *Behold My Servant whom I have chosen* (Isa. 43: 10), says the Father; in this masterpiece of My work none in heaven or earth is fit to serve Me but Mine own Son. And as He came into the world according to that decree and will, so He goes out of it again in that way; *the Son of man goeth as is determined*, it was wickedly and maliciously done by men against Him, but *determined* (which is that He there speaks of) wisely and graciously by His Father with His own consent. L.—Christ was never so joyful in all His life, that we read of, as when His sufferings grew near; then He takes the sacrament of His body and blood into His own hands, and with thanksgiving bestows

it among His disciples ; then He sings a hymn, then He rejoices, then He comes with a " Lo, I come." Oh, the heart, the great heart that Jesus had for us to do us good ! He did it with all the desire of His soul. *Bunyan.*

Christ said, " The cross is in My path, and on it and from it I exercise the influence, to exercise which I have come into the world, and there I *do* the thing which I came forth from the Father to do." He thought of His death not as the end of His work, but as the centre-point of it ; not as the termination of His activity, but as its climax, to which all the rest was subordinated, and without which all the rest was nought. He does not die, and so seal a faithful life by an heroic death—but dies, so bearing and bearing away man's sin. He regarded from the beginning " the glory that should follow," and the suffering through which He had to wade to reach it, in one and the same act of presence, and said, " Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of Me." If we carried with us more distinctly than we do that one simple thought, that in all the human joys, in all the apparently self-forgetting tenderness of that Lord who had a heart for every sorrow and an ear for every complaint, and a hand open as day and full of melting charity for every need—that in every moment of that life, in the boyhood, in the dawning manhood, in the maturity of His growing human power—there was always present one black shadow, toward which He ever went straight with the consent of His will and the clearest eye, we should understand something more of how the life as well as the death was a sacrifice for us sinful men ! A. M.

The words carry with them another truth : Wherever there is difficulty, wherever there is sin, or sorrow, or need, in proportion as the difficulty, sin, sorrow, need, become extreme, there Jesus comes. It is not one, but a long series of advents, Jesus coming nearer to us and we, as we are drawn, coming a little nearer to Him, day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment. It is so the work is done, and it is so that the union becomes established between a sinner and Christ, that union which can never be broken forever and forever. J V.—A man is not saved because he is better than other men, but because he is in Christ and Christ is in him. He who is lost is not lost because he is worse than other men, but because he is not in Christ and Christ is not in him. Christ's obedience unto death imputed to us by God and received by faith—this is the way, and the only way, to holiness and heaven. *David Winters.*

All the work of our redemption was in a manner achieved when our Saviour did appear ; His incarnation was the great step toward it ; as being an act of the humblest obedience and of the highest merit that could anywise be performed, for satisfying the justice of God, and winning His favor toward us ; His taking up life may well seem more meritorious than His laying it down, and the chief passion which He could ever undergo. His death was a passion, great as death could be ; His life also was a continual passion, or exercise of huge patience ; but His birth seemeth to be the greatest and strangest passion of all, involving the lowest submission and the deepest suffering. What nobler sacrifice could there be than God's offering Himself up to mortality, to infirmity, to slavery ? What obedience can be thought of comparable to that which He did express when He said, " Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. I came down, not that I might do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me ?" *Barrow.*

The volume of the book, or the roll of Scripture. The second noun is the one used in Hebrew to denote the written revelation of God's will, and the first to describe the form of an ancient Oriental book, not unlike that of a modern map, and still retained in the manuscripts used in the synagogue worship. The reference here is to the Law of Moses. A.

8. I delight to do Thy will, O my God. The will of God to redeem sinners by the incarnation and death of Jesus Christ was most grateful and pleasing to the very heart of Christ. It is said (Prov. 8 : 31) when He was solacing Himself in the sweetest enjoyment of His Father, while He lay in that blessed bosom of delights, yet the very prospect of this work gave Him pleasure, then His " delights were with the sons of men." And when He was come into the world, and had endured many abuses and injuries, and was even now come to the most difficult part of the work ; yet, " how am I straitened, or pained (saith He), till it be accomplished !" *Flavel.*

The Divine will was very dear to Jesus from its connection with the work and the reward of redemption. Mark here the bearing of an unselfish end on an unselfish rule of life. The purpose for which Christ lived and died was unselfish—to bless others with eternal life ; and the fondness with which He cherished this unselfish end exalted the unselfish rule. Living in the joy of the coming blessedness of His people, He could serenely and contentedly bow to that will by which their glory was secured.

W. G. B.—The one undeviating object of the Son all through was the glory of the Father ; He came to do His will, and He fulfilled it with all the unvarying intensity of the most heavenly affection. What, then, will not be the exuberant joy of His heart, when in His glorious kingdom He shall see the Father beyond all measure glorified ? *Goodhart.*

This, then, is the secret of the choice of life, to learn what, among the manifold duties of His great household, God, in the eternal purpose of His love, willed each one of us to discharge. To have discovered this and to have placed ourselves in that path, conforming ourselves therein to the will of God, is to have taken, by God's grace a decisive step in the way of salvation. For it is to have chosen the will of God and united our own to His ; it is to answer the purpose of God for us ; it is to be under the guidance of the All-wise, the protection of the Almighty. *Pusey.*

9, 10. But not obedience only, but thanksgiving also shall form a part of his grateful acknowledgment of God's goodness ; he will both do the will and speak the praises of Jehovah. This last, too, is better than sacrifice. Words are here heaped upon words to express the eager forwardness of a heart burning to show its gratitude. No elaborate description could so well have given us the likeness of one whose "life was a thanksgiving." *P.*

The Gospel of Jehovah's justifying and gracious rule he has published to the whole of Israel ; and he can appeal to the omniscient One, that neither from fear of man nor from shame and indolence has he restrained his lips from confessing Him. This rich material for evangelical preaching in the history of redemption he has not allowed to slumber like a dead, unfruitful knowledge deep down and hidden in his heart. The new song, which Jehovah put into his mouth, he has also really sung. He is, therefore, without fear for the future. *D.*

9. "Preached righteousness," the Hebrew word being the most perfect equivalent which the language affords for *evangelizing*, *i.e.*, preaching the glad tidings of Gospel salvation. It is used repeatedly in this sense by Isaiah (40 : 9 and 52 : 7). The expressions, "In the great congregation ;" "not concealed from the great congregation," take their form from the times of David, when the great congregation of all Israel convened at the one place for worship ; but in sense it purports that Christ proclaimed this Gospel to the Israel of His time and through them to the wide world. Having made propitiation for sin by His death, He pro-

claimed for all the race free pardon and God's righteousness in forgiving sin. These verses make this idea very emphatic. *C.*

10. He emphatically repeats that he had not hidden his gratitude to God and his sense of the Divine goodness in his own breast, but had freely published it to others, not from ostentation, but from an impulse of love and obligation which could not be repressed. He who believes in his heart should make confession with his lips (Rom. 10 : 10). *W. H. G.*

A true inward experience or discovery of God in the heart is itself an impulse also of self-manifestation, as all love and gratitude are—wants to speak and declare itself, and will as naturally do it when it is born as a child will utter its first cry. David speaks as one who could not find how to suppress the joy that filled his heart, but must needs break loose in a testimony for God. And so it is in all cases the instinct of a new heart, in its experience of God, to acknowledge Him. The change implied in a true Christian experience or the revelation of God in the heart is in its very nature the soul and root of an outward change that is correspondent. The faith implanted is a faith that works in appropriate demonstrations, and must as certainly work as a living heart must beat or pulsate. It is the righteousness of God revealed within to be henceforth the actuating spring and power of a righteous and devoted life. It will inform the whole man. It will glow in the countenance. It will irradiate the eye. It will speak from the tongue. It will enter into all the transactions of business, the domestic tempers, the social manifestations and offices. It will make the man a benefactor and call him into self-sacrifice for God and the truth. It will send him forth to be God's advocate with men, and require him to make full testimony, either formally or by implication, of what God has done for him. Of this a true Christian experience is the root and beginning, else it is nothing. The inward change is no reality, but a pure fiction, if it does not issue in this. In this it will issue when it is allowed to act unrestrainedly, even though it be at first the smallest seed of grace possible. There will be times, more or less private, when the humblest and weakest disciples can speak of what God has done for them, with the very best effect. Nor is there anything so unpractical and destitute of Christian respect as the shyness of some fastidious people in this matter. It never exists in a truly manly character or in connection with a full-toned, living godliness. That will be no such dainty affair. It will speak out.

It will declare what God has done, and show the method by which He works. The new joy felt will be a new song in the mouth, and every new deliverance will be fitly, gratefully confessed. There will be no shallow affectation of delicacy shutting the lips and sealing them in a forced dumbness, as if the righteousness of God had been taken by a deed of larceny. How often will two disciples help and strengthen each other by showing, each the other, in what way God has led him, what his struggles have been, and where his victories. They spake often, one to another, says the prophet, and God hearkened and heard it. God listens for nothing so tenderly as when His children help each other by their testimonies to His goodness and the way in which He has brought them deliverance. Besides there is a higher view of these personal testimonies and confessions. All these experiences or life-histories of the faithful will be among the grandest studies and most glorious revelations of the future—a spiritual epic of wars, and defeats, and falls, and victories, and wondrous turns of deliverance, and unseen ministries of God and angels, that, when they are opened to the saints, will furnish the sublimest of all their discoveries of Christ and of God. *Bushnell.*

The open, active profession of Christ, the manifestation of faith and love in temper, word, and deed is not an *optional* duty. Nature, as certainly as it ordains that light shall shine, ordains that gratitude shall give thanks and praise, that love and faith and hope shall *show* themselves by labor and sacrifice, by patience in well-doing. Truthfulness, fidelity, manliness, *all demand* that if a man loves Christ he will take part with Christ, as one that loves his country or his friends will espouse the cause of country or friends. Sincerity, loyalty, benevolence, demand that if a man desires the participation of others in the salvation to whose hope he has attained, he shall put forth every exertion and use every influence by which this object may be achieved. And the Christian's own spiritual life, his growth in grace and sanctification, his *happiness* here and hereafter, all strongly enforce the duty of open, active profession by word and deed as absolutely indispensable and imperative. B.

11. With this verse begins the second part of the Psalm, which runs altogether in a different strain; reflecting on his deep sinfulness, the Psalmist is full of grief, and expresses his feelings in earnest prayers, sad confessions, imprecations against his enemies, and longings for deliverance. *Cook.*

12. My iniquities. This verse is quite decisive as to the question which has been raised respecting the Messianic interpretation of the Psalm. It is quite impossible to refer such words as these to Christ; and when expositors choose to say that "my iniquities" mean "the iniquities laid upon me," they are doing violence, most unjustifiably, to the plain words of the text. P.

They are more than the hairs of mine head. We lose ourselves when we speak of the sins of our lives. It may astonish any considering man to take notice how many sins he is guilty of any one day; how many sins accompany any one single act; nay, how many bewray themselves in any one religious duty. Whensoever ye do anything forbidden, you omit the duty at that time commanded; and whenever you neglect that which is enjoined, the omission is joined with the acting of something forbidden; so that the sin, whether omission or commission, is always double; nay, the apostle makes every sin tenfold (Jas. 2:10). *D. Clarkson.*

If any one, trying to make higher attainments and achieve some higher standing in religion, is overwhelmed with the infirmity and bitter evil of his own heart, and cries, My iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; what is there in such a discovery to break down his confidence? Just there is the place for him to believe and begin to sing with Paul, I thank God, through Jesus Christ my Lord. The very first thing to be held by a true Christian is that he has no inherent sufficiency for anything; and then upon that he should place as the universal antidote to discouragement, the great principle of accruing grace, sealed by the promise, My grace is sufficient for thee. *Bushnell.*

16. Let all those that seek Thee rejoice and be glad in Thee. As every mercy to every believer giveth a proof of God's readiness to show the like mercy to all believers when they stand in need, so should every mercy shown to any of the number, being known to the rest, be made the matter and occasion of magnifying the Lord. *Dickson.*—

Love thy salvation. If we love with all our hearts His great salvation, let us proclaim the glory of God which is resplendent therein. Never let His praises cease. As the heart is warm with gladness, let it incite the tongue to perpetual praise. If we cannot do what we would for the spread of the kingdom, at least let us desire and pray for it. S.—The more that we limit the essentials of life, and find the

springs of our pleasure in the nearest and simplest things, the more shall we open again that fountain of gladness which seems to have dried up in the midst of our desert of life. Being cumbered about many things is fatal to gladness. It distracts us, it draws us two ways. Gladness lies very much in oneness. "One thing I do," must be the word of the men who would reopen the spring of the ancient *hilaritas* in our modern world. It was the word of the man who was "always rejoicing;" who wrote to his converts, "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice." The springs of gladness are within every healthy nature, and will flow, if the stone of care is not laid on them too heavily. The resolution to live simply, to cut off superfluities, to unmask falsities, to establish honesties, and to maintain them resolutely at all costs, is like rolling away the stone that seals the fountain; it will bubble forth pure draughts of joy. Another spring of gladness is wholesome, noble work. No man is glad when living to himself. Man is made for the life of communion; the perfect form of human life was the life which found its blessedness in giving itself to mankind. *Anon.*

17. The transition in the original is very animated: "And as for me poor and needy, the Lord will care for me: my help and deliverer

art Thou; O my God, tarry not." The last word is a deep sigh. *Cook.*

What comfort there is in the thought that the Lord does not pivot His remembrance of us on our remembrance of Him! We may at times be so absorbed in thought or work that we forget to ask God's blessing, or to thank Him for it when it has been given, but He goes right on blessing us at all times without waiting for our prayers or our praises. Yet shall it be that we are less mindful of God because of our confidence that God will never be unmindful of us? Ought not God's never-failing remembrance of us to quicken and intensify our loving remembrance of God? *S. S. T.*

Not forsaken and alone, when this is pondered and believed: "The Lord thinketh on me." Where is the past which this faith will not make clear? where the present which it will not brighten? where the future, which with this certainty cannot be awaited in calm hope? Here, then, is all my hope and comfort, that, despite my backslidings, Thou wilt not yet draw back Thine hand. Oh, teach me, then, despite myself, a firmer faith; yea, such a faith that this "My God" of inmost fellowship must ever deeply and more fully vibrate within my heart! *Van O.*

PSALM XLI.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN. A PSALM OF DAVID.

1 BLESSED is he that considereth the poor :
The LORD will deliver him in the day of evil.
2 The LORD will preserve him, and keep him
alive, and he shall be blessed upon the
earth ;
And deliver not thou him unto the will of
his enemies.
3 The LORD will support him upon the couch
of languishing :
Thou makest all his bed in his sickness.
4 I said, O LORD, have mercy upon me :
Heal my soul ; for I have sinned against
thee.
5 Mine enemies speak evil against me, *saying,*

When shall he die, and his name perish ?
6 And if he come to see *me*, he speaketh van-
ity ;
His heart gathereth iniquity to itself :
When he goeth abroad, he telleth it.
7 All that hate me whisper together against
me :
Against me do they devise my hurt.
8 An evil disease, *say they*, cleaveth fast unto
him :
And now that he lieth he shall rise up no
more.
9 Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I
trusted, which did eat of my bread,
Hath lifted up his heel against me.

10 But thou, O LORD, have mercy upon me,
and raise me up,
That I may requite them.
11 By this I know that thou delightest in me,
Because mine enemy doth not triumph over
me.
12 And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine
integrity,

And settest me before thy face for ever.

13 BLESSED BE JEHOVAH, THE GOD OF
ISRAEL,
FROM EVERLASTING AND TO EVER-
LASTING.
AMEN, AND AMEN.

THIS Psalm seems to have been written in a season of recovery from sickness, and under a deep sense of the hypocrisy and ingratitude of false friends, who came to the Psalmist pretending to condole with him in his sickness, while in reality they hated him in their hearts and wished for his death. The Psalm opens with a eulogy pronounced on those who know how to feel for and show compassion to the miserable and the suffering. This is evidently designed in order to condemn more forcibly, by way of contrast, the opposite line of conduct which is the subject of complaint. The Psalmist's own experience of the baseness and hollowness of the men who surrounded him made him only appreciate more sensibly the great value of faithful, sympathizing friends in a season of affliction. P.

1, 2. The Psalm begins by celebrating the blessedness of the lot, rich in promise, of the compassionate man. **Poor.** A general designation of the poor, the sick, the weak, the suffering, and of any one who is wavering outwardly or inwardly, and is therefore liable to fall. To show such an one sympathetic attention, to turn to him with considerate regard, has attached to it a great promise. D.

There is only one beatitude in the Psalter which has reference to a special kind of conduct, and that is a significant one. "Blessed is he that considereth the poor"—he who carries the remembrances of him in his mind and in his heart, who, in the midst of his own abundance, can look beyond it, and by an effort of sympathetic imagination can bring into his presence the needy and sad. This, the charity that comes of God, this open heart, and careful remembrance of all the afflicted and the miserable, is the one virtue which the Psalter thinks worthy of being ennobled by a special benediction. For all the rest the general idea is all that is given to us—the felicity of the man that keeps the commandments of God. "Conduct is three fourths of life," and, according to the Old Testament, keeping God's commandments is the whole of conduct. A. M.

1. *Happy (the man) acting wisely toward the*

poor (man); in the day of evil Jehovah will deliver him. As the first verb sometimes has the sense of *attending* or *attentively considering*, some understand it to mean here *considering* (or *attending to*) *the poor*. But its proper import of *acting prudently* (or *wisely*) is entirely appropriate, and therefore entitled to the preference. What is meant by *acting wisely toward the poor* may be gathered from the parallel passage (Psalm 34 : 13, 14). The principle assumed is that expressed by our Saviour in Matt. 5 : 7. *The poor* here includes all forms of want and suffering, and might be translated *wretched*. A.

Considereth. This word includes the ideas of thoughtful attention and judicious kindness, the kindness of a man who does not misinterpret the affliction. *Cook.*—"Considereth" is somewhat more than *thinketh upon*. The primary sense is to look attentively toward, but here with the farther idea of looking *kindly*, with due sympathy and with prompt relief. Such an one the Lord delivers in the day of his trouble. Loving the spirit that sympathizes with the suffering, He will miss no fit opportunity to express His love by rewarding it openly. C.—Probably no one ever thought of compassion as being anything less than a joy, a holy bliss of feeling. And yet it is *compassion*. It suffers *with* its objects, takes their burdens, struggles with their sorrows—all which is pain, a loss of happiness. Still it is no loss, because there is another element in the conscious greatness of the loss, and the man is even raised in order by the inward exaltation he feels. So in respect to pity, longsuffering, patience with evil, and meekness under wrong. They have all a side of loss, and yet they are the noblest augmentations of blessedness. There is a law of moral compensation in them all, by which their suffering is married to inevitable joy. *Anon.*

The Divine conception of the matter is plainly this : That power is not a gift to man, but a trust ; that the human family is one vast brotherhood, all men deriving their life, their personal constitution and force from the endowment of God, and all being, therefore, interlinked with

each other by the primitive constitution of their being, as well as by every command imposed, by their common immortality, and their common need of Divine grace and help; and that he who has power, specially intrusted to him of God, has it for the use of others and of all whom by it he may affect for good—in affecting whom he may be even the instrument of advancing the Divine glory in the world. They who are weak have, therefore, a right to claim his help; and he who has the special power is under obligation by reason of it, is under a solemn and incessant responsibility for the right use of it. It is not a gratuity when he draws from it for the benefit of others; it is the discharge of a debt; it is the partial fulfilment of a peremptory and an eternal obligation; and when he withholds from others that use of his power by which he might have benefited them, he is not exercising a right, but is resisting his Maker, and bringing himself under certain condemnation. He is to be the spring on the hill-side, whose office it is to fertilize the meadow. He is to be the sun in the heavens, by reason of his superior eminence in knowledge and in genius, whose office it is to enlighten the less gifted; and the talent unused, either hidden in the napkin or buried in the ground, becomes a condition of recompensing judgment. There is something fearful as well as beautiful in every increase of power, under this conception of the duty which that power constantly owes to weakness. The sure and swift judgment of the Lord awaits each man who has had such power; and it will decide as to the use which he has made of it, and the extent to which he has fulfilled the obligation that comes interwoven inseparably with it. The weak, according to this Divine conception, have a constant claim on the protection of the strong; the poor have a right to the aid of the rich; the ignorant properly demand the assistance and the illuminating guidance of genius and of wisdom. These are claims which invest all more fortunate men, from those who are obscure, from those who are in darkness, from those who are in peril; and it becomes simply imperative, under the Christian conception of things, upon those who are strong, wise, enriched, to give the help which others need. No other duty is more instant or more binding. R. S. S.

How foolish are they that fear to lose their wealth by giving it, and fear not to lose themselves by keeping it! Thou hast riches here, and here be objects that need thy riches—the poor; in heaven there are riches enough but no poor, therefore, by faith in Christ make over

to them thy money^s in this world, that by bill of exchange thou mayest receive it in the world to come; that only you carry with you which you send before you. Do good while it is in your power; relieve the oppressed, succor the fatherless, while your estates are your own; when you are dead your riches belong to others. *Francis Raworth.*

How often it is difficult to be wisely charitable; to do good without multiplying the sources of evil. To give alms is nothing unless you give thought also. It is written, not “blessed is he that feedeth the poor,” but “blessed is he that considereth the poor.” A little thought and a little kindness are often worth more than a great deal of money. *Ruskin* —The Bible calls you to *consider* the poor. It makes the virtue of relieving them a matter of computation as well as of sentiment, and in so doing puts you beyond the reach of the various delusions, by which you are at one time led to prefer the indulgence of pity to the substantial interest of its object; at another are led to retire chagrined and disappointed from the scene of duty, because you have not met with the gratitude or the honesty that you laid your account with; at another are led to expend all your anxieties upon the accommodation of time, and to overlook eternity. It is the office of *consideration* to save you from all these fallacies. Under its tutorage attention to the wants of the poor ripens into principle. It is not enough that you give money and add your name to the contributions of charity; you must give it with judgment. You must give your time and your attention and make yourself acquainted with the object of your benevolent exercises. To give money is not to do all the work and labor of benevolence. You must lend your hand to the work of assistance. This is true and unsophisticated goodness. *Chalmers.*

3. “Make all his bed in his sickness” means in the original much more than making a sick man’s bed comfortable. It means to change his sick-bed to a bed of healthful repose, implying the change of his state from sickness to health. The Hebrew word, having the sense to turn or change, looks for its object beyond his bed to his bodily state. C.—God has promised His people that He will strengthen them and make them easy under their bodily pains and sicknesses. He has not promised that they shall never be sick, nor that they shall not lie long languishing, nor that their sickness shall not be unto death; but He has promised to enable them to bear their affliction with patience, and cheerfully to wait the issue; the

soul shall by His grace be made to dwell at ease when the body lies in pain. H.

If it be a soul, made merciful from evangelical motives—a man who having received mercy loves to show it, and whose soul, overflowing with the peace of God, is bountiful and benignant, then we can hardly conceive a more blessed state of mind than the mercifulness so produced. There is a mechanical performance of good offices in which there is little zest or satisfaction; but that full-hearted kindness, that effluent and effusive goodness which the love of Christ constrains, and the Spirit of God supplies—there is an increase in its expenditure, and in its efforts and exertions a continual feast. Such mercifulness is blessedness. Repeated into habit and infused into the very temper of the soul, it comes out again in the face of the philanthropist, a cheerful serenity, and an obvious charity with all that God has made. And when sickness comes, and weakness and decay, there comes a secret strength. The pillow grows unaccountably soft and the silent chamber surprisingly bright and happy. The reason is—the Lord is there. The prayers have been heard of many debtors to His kindness and friendly offices, and, better than angels, the Lord of angels comes and makes all his bed in his sickness. *Hamilton.*

4. For I have sinned, *i.e.*, it is my sin which has brought this suffering on me; but observe the prayer is, “Pardon my sin,” not “take away my suffering.” P.—God is the strength of a Christian’s heart, by healing and restoring him when the infused habits of grace fail and sin grows strong and vigorous. A Christian never fails in the exercise of grace, but sin gives him a wound; and therefore David prayed, “*Lord, heal my soul, for I have sinned.*” And what David prayed for God promiseth to His people: “I will heal their backsliding.” *S. Blackerby.*—Saul and Judas each said, “I have sinned;” but David says, “I have sinned *against Thee.*” *Plumer.*—Plead we the greatness of our sins not to keep us from mercy, but to prevail for it. “Heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee.” “Do Thou it for Thy name’s sake; for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against Thee” (Jer. 14 : 7). This is a strong plea, when sincerely urged by an humble and contrite spirit. It glorifieth God as one that is abundant in goodness, rich in mercy, and one with whom are forgivenesses and plenteous redemption; and it honoreth Christ as infinite in mercy. *T. Cobbet.*

Here is a confession, a plea, and a prayer.

A confession, “I have sinned against Thee.” Thus we must come and confess to the Lord to-day, to-morrow, and every day, till the sun of life sets. Sense of sin, whether now contracted or long since committed, abides with us; it wounds and pains a gracious soul. Here grace discovers itself; that soul waits not for time to efface the memory of sin, nor strives to stifle convictions for it, but goes humbly to the Lord and confesses, it with all its aggravations, and with this above all others, *Lord, “against Thee have I sinned.”* Oh, may my soul never, never lose this conviction, that every sin is against Thee, my Lord and loving Father; Thee, my Lord and precious Redeemer; Thee, my Lord and gracious Comforter; this makes sin exceeding sinful, while it magnifies the superabounding riches of grace in receiving sinners and in pardoning sin. Consider *the plea*; it is not the Pharisee’s parade, but it is the publican’s plea: “Lord, be merciful to me,” to me a sinner, who have done nothing to deserve Thy favor, yet plead Thy mercy promised to sinners in Christ Jesus; Thou canst be just and yet justify the ungodly who believe in Jesus. Therefore his *prayer* is, “heal my soul.” No prayers, no tears, no duties of mine can heal my soul; no, my best works are stained with pollution, my holiest duties are mixed with sin; nothing but the blood of *the Lamb* can bring pardon to my heart, peace to my conscience, and healing to my soul. “The Lord will speak peace unto His people and His saints” (Psalm 85 : 8). *W. Mason.*

9. Our Lord applies this verse expressly to Himself and Judas, which shows that He was really included in the class to which the Psalm relates. It is remarkable, however, that He only quotes the second of the three descriptive phrases, *eating My bread*, enjoying My society, and subsisting on My bounty, while He omits the other two, because these would have represented Judas as His friend, and one in whom He trusted. But He knew from the beginning who it was that should betray Him. This accurate distinction seems to confirm the assumption that the Psalm has a generic meaning, and is only applicable to our Saviour as the most illustrious representative of the class which it describes. A.

Part of this verse is quoted by our Lord in John 13 : 18 as applicable to the treacherous conduct of Judas, but with the significant omission of the words “*Mine own familiar friend, whom I trusted;*” for our Lord knew what was in Judas from the beginning, and therefore did not trust him. Nothing can be more decisive,

both as to the way in which quotations were made, and also as to the proper interpretation of the apparently strong phrase, "that the Scripture might be fulfilled;" with which the quotation is introduced. First, it is plain that *particular expressions* in a Psalm may be applicable to events which befell our Lord, while the whole Psalm is not in like manner applicable. And next it is evident that "the Scripture is fulfilled" not merely when a prediction receives its accomplishment, but when words descriptive of certain circumstances in the life of the Old Testament saints find a still fuller and truer realization—one not foreseen by the Psalmist, yet one no less designed of God—in the circumstances of our Lord's earthly life. This will be peculiarly the case here if Ahithophel be meant; for as David was in much of his life a type of Christ, so the treachery of his trusted counsellor would be a foreshadowing of the treachery of Judas. P.

Men talk of the resentments of those who are wronged—of the deep and bitter animosities which lie in the hearts of those who are oppressed; but if human history reveals a solitary truth, it is, that the hatred of all hatreds, the most indomitable and the most cruel, broods in the heart of him who inflicts the wrong. And if you want to become transformed, in your inmost soul, into an absolute devil, I merely tell you, wrong your neighbor; cheat him, defraud him, oppress him, use your influence and power to inflict upon him injury, day after day, and year after year; and by the fixed laws which God has given to the human soul, you pass from a man into a devil at the last. It is bound to be so; and hence there sprung up in the heart of this traitor a desperate enmity against his Lord from the moment in which the thought of His betrayal was conceived. *Palmer*.

10. "Requite them." This does not demand the sense of retaliation, much less of selfish, revengeful retaliation, for it may mean, that I may repay them good for their evil. Indeed, the Hebrew word strongly favors this sense—to make good again, to make all whole, sound. David has repeatedly expressed this sentiment in his Psalms (35: 12-14 and 7: 4); and yet better, has lived it forth in his actual deeds (1 Sam. 24: 9-15 and 26: 18-25). There is no occasion, therefore, to give these words the bad sense of a malign, wicked retaliation. C.

12. Thou upholdest me. The assurance of a righteous cause and a righteous judge will preserve an inward and joyful tranquillity of soul in the midst of all the storms of reproach and scandalous imputations, like the

calmness of a haven when the sea is tempestuous without. And this will fortify believers to bear with an invincible courage all the violence that is offered to them for their fidelity to God: all the wrongs and injuries they endure shall be redressed with infinite advantage. *Bates*.

Settest me before Thy face forever.

If this phrase stood alone it might possibly be explained of confidence in perfect restoration to God's favor and life-long peace; but comparing it with other passages (Psalms 16: 11; 17: 15; 23: 6; 30: 12) we find here the distinct intimation of a hope of immortality. *Cook*.

13. This is no part of the original Psalm, but is merely a later doxology, appended here when the Psalms were collected, in order to mark the conclusion of the first book. Similar doxologies occur at the end of the three following books. P.—*Blessed* is applied to God as the expression of good-will, gratitude, and reverence on the part of the worshipper. *The Lord God of Israel*; Jehovah, who is the God of Israel. Israel is the church of the elect, and stands for the Catholic Church of all ages. *From everlasting to everlasting*. This in its strict sense applies to Jehovah, the Eternal Self-existent One, and to the ascription of praise as always due, whether there was or was not an intelligent being to render it. *Amen, and Amen*. This has become a household word in our mother tongue. It means true, and therefore expresses assent, and when repeated, emphatic assent to the foregoing petition. Be it so, yea, be it so. M.—In this word centre all the requests, and are put up together: so be it. And there is in it withal a profession of confidence that it shall be so. It is from one root with those words which signify believing and truth. *Leighton*.

As the Psalms were not written by one man, so neither do they form one book. The Psalter is, in fact, a Pentateuch, and the lines of demarcation, which divide the five books one from another, are clear and distinct enough. At the end of the forty-first Psalm, of the seventy-second, of the eighty-ninth, and of the one hundred and sixteenth we meet with the solemn *Amen*, single or redoubled, following on a doxology, which indicates that one book ends and that another is about to begin. A closer study of the Psalms shows that each book possesses characteristics of its own. *Plumptre*.—How ancient this division is cannot now be clearly ascertained. Jerome, in his epistle to Marcella, and Epiphanius speak of the Psalms as having been divided by the Hebrews into five books, but when this division was made they do not in-

form us. The forms of ascriptions of praise, added at the end of each of the five books, are in the Septuagint version, from which we may conclude that this distribution had been made before that version was executed. It was probably made by Ezra, after the return of the Jews from Babylon to their own country, and the establishment of the worship of God in the new temple, and it was perhaps made in imitation of a similar distribution of the books of Moses. In making this division of the Hebrew Psalter, regard appears to have been paid to the subject-matter of the Psalms. *Calvin.*

When the breath of God so visits the human mind as to free it from its ordinary fallibility, without fettering the play of its usual tendencies or altering its natural constitution, that is called inspiration. Accordingly we find among the sacred writers great variety of style, which originates no doubt in great variety of mind. Each man strikes his own note in the gamut of Divine truth ; but no one strikes the same note as another. The Psalms of David are altogether different from the Epistles of Paul, and these again from the Epistles of Peter, and all from the Gospel of John. The mind of each writer was under the same afflatus, but develops itself freely according to its own bias, being only so far restrained as to confine it strictly within the limits of truth. By this arrangement we gain the sympathy of the inspired

writers—no small thing surely. Every word comes to us from the Divine afflatus, indeed ; but at the same time steeped and bathed in the experience of David, of Paul, of Peter, and of John. It is a man who speaks ; a man who has realized in his own inmost soul what he is speaking about. What life it lends to the Holy Scriptures, to read them in connection with the history of their writers ! Thus sings the sweet Psalmist of Israel, once a young shepherd boy—the loyal, the generous, the brave—and yet than whom never saint of God fell lower or more foully. *Goulburn.*

The ancients held the authority of Scripture to the full as earnestly and tenaciously as we can. But these were their ways of citing : “ Hear what says the beloved apostle, he who lay gathering truth on the breast of Jesus ; ” “ Listen to Paul, to him whose words I seem to hear, not as words, but as claps of thunder ; ” “ Will you not hear Peter, him to whom the Great Shepherd said, ‘ Pasture My sheep ? ’ ” And so the Divine words came in each case, wedded as it were to the winning music of a human character ; carried into men’s hearts by a throbbing life whose pulses coincided with their own. Oh, that we, too, read Scripture thus ! that we spent less energy on making the Bible into a fetish, and more on a fearless and childlike search after its living voice ! *Alford.*

SECOND BOOK OF THE PSALTER.

PSALMS XLII.—LXXII.

PSALM XLII.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN ; MASCHIL OF THE SONS OF KORAH.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1 As the hart panteth after the water brooks,
So panteth my soul after thee, O God.</p> <p>2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living
God :
When shall I come and appear before God ?</p> <p>3 My tears have been my meat day and night,
While they continually say unto me, Where
is thy God ?</p> <p>4 These things I remember, and pour out my
soul within me,
How I went with the throng, and led them
to the house of God,
With the voice of joy and praise, a multi-
tude keeping holyday.</p> <p>5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul ?
And <i>why</i> art thou disquieted within me ?
Hope thou in God : for I shall yet praise
him
<i>For</i> the health [or, <i>help</i>] of his countenance.</p> <p>6 O my God, my soul is cast down within me :
Therefore do I remember thee from the land
of Jordan,</p> | <p>And the Hermons, from the hill Mizar.</p> <p>7 Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy
waterspouts .
All thy waves and thy billows are gone over
me.</p> <p>8 <i>Yet</i> the LORD will command his lovingkind-
ness in the day-time,
And in the night his song shall be with me,
<i>Even</i> a prayer unto the God of my life.</p> <p>9 I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou
forgotten me ?
Why go I mourning because of the oppres-
sion of the enemy ?</p> <p>10 As with a sword in my bones, mine adver-
saries reproach me ;
While they continually say unto me, Where
is thy God ?</p> <p>11 Why art thou cast down, O my soul ?
And why art thou disquieted within me ?
Hope thou in God : for I shall yet praise
him,
<i>Who is</i> the health of my countenance, and
my God.</p> |
|--|--|

THIS forty-second Psalm has been for centuries one of the most powerful cordials for the heartsick and despondent, and its virtue has grown rather than diminished with the lapse of years, and yet we do not know its author, nor its date, nor the peculiar circumstances under which it was written. All we know is that it is the utterance of some one in deep trouble, and that it tells us how he found comfort, and how we may find it under similar circumstances. V.

There are good grounds for concluding that this Psalm and the next constituted originally but one poem. The internal evidence favors

this hypothesis. Nor is external evidence wanting which points the same way. Thirty-seven of Kennicott's manuscripts and nine of De Rossi's have but one Psalm instead of two. The LXX., it is true, make a distinct Psalm of the forty-third. But, according to Delitzsch, an old Midrash which reckons one hundred and forty-seven Psalms in all, takes these two as one, as well as Psalms 9, 10, and 32, 33. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that each Psalm is complete in itself ; and it is conceivable that, though originally existing as one poem, the present arrangement might have been

adopted the better to suit the purposes either of personal or liturgical use. P.—The sameness of the situation, of the character, of the structure and of the refrain decides in favor of our regarding them, though commonly counted two, as being but one. The one Psalm consists of three divisions; the Psalmist's sorrow breaks out thrice into complaint, and is each time overcome by the encouraging voice of his higher consciousness. In the portrayal of the present and the future there is an unmistakable advance. And it is not until the third division (Psalm 43) that complaint, resignation, and hope are rendered complete by the addition of confident prayer. D.

God in Scripture frequently uses nature to illustrate grace. What is still more remarkable, He uses often the sterner aspects of nature, those with which power and terror are associated, to illustrate or to emphasize His tenderness and love toward His children. The forty-second Psalm is a Psalm of distress and longing. It is set in the key of a stormy ocean. In it is heard the sound of the floods. "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts. All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me." But out of the noise of the waves comes a voice of hope and cheerful trust. "Yet the Lord will command His lovingkindness in the day-time, and in the night His song shall be with me." The Psalm is the utterance of a man looking back out of present sorrow over a happy past. The scene is laid among the mountains on the east of the Jordan. From these the spectator had unfolded to him a magnificent view of the Land of Promise. Lebanon, the Sea of Galilee, the plain of Esdraelon, Carmel and the Mediterranean, the whole range of the mountains of Judah and Ephraim, Bethlehem and Jerusalem could be seen from different standpoints. The prospect from the Hermons and from Mizar, the little hill, was full of points consecrated by their histories of God's special manifestation and help. V.

TITLE. *To the chief musician. Maschil. To the sons of Korah.* The obvious reference to personal experience and feelings in this Psalm made it the more necessary to designate it as a *maschil* or didactic Psalm, intended for permanent and public use. A.

1, 2. Thousands of years have gone by since these words first found expression. They never fail to find a deep response within the inmost sanctuary of a longing soul, since they represent the deepest need of every human heart. No one can understand this Psalm of the panting hart as can the Christian who has been con-

ducted by the Lord unto living fountains of waters. He is not satisfied when he has but begun to know the Lord; he seeks to make advance from light to light, from one stage to another in true blessedness. The more he has enjoyed of fellowship with God, the more he longs to taste of it; the more God condescends to him, the higher does he seek to rise to God. *Van O.*

The soul of man bears the image of God; so nothing can satisfy it but He whose image it bears. Our soul, says Augustine, was created as by God, so for God, and is therefore never quiet till it rest in God. As man fell at first into this restlessness by falling away from God, so he cannot be recovered of it but by returning to Him again. As the dove after she left the ark found no rest for the sole of her foot in the wide world till she betook her again thither from whence she came forth, so neither can man, fallen from God, find any sure rest for the foot of his soul in the whole world beside, till he come back to Him again from whom he came at the first. *Gataker.*

It is not only fear or terror, bearing us along as on the wings of wind, or in the rattling of the thunder-storm, which has shown man that there is a God; nor has he first read God's great name inscribed among the stars. Deep, strong as the instinctive influence through which the new-born babe longs for the mother's breast, which it has not yet known; loud as the cry raised by young ravens for the food, whose taste they never yet have felt; strong, and yet silent, as the attraction for the light, not yet perceived, felt by the scarce developed plant, and the as yet unopened eye—the inward thirsting for the everlasting Source of all that breathes and lives makes itself deeply felt within us all. *Schubert.*—The most inward desires, the purest affections, the loftiest aspirings, that stir our blood—all that is tender in us and all that is strong, all that is sacred and all that is enduring—pain and loss, love and death, repentance and fear—as each in turn through all this solemn discipline of life has its hour of trial or of triumph—cry out for the living God, and bid us worship the Father in spirit. F. D. H.

He who begins to realize God's majestic beauty and eternity, and feels in contrast how little and how transitory man is, how dependent and feeble, longs to lean upon God for support. For where rather should the weak rest than on the strong, the creature of a day than on the Eternal, the imperfect than on the centre of perfection? And where else should God dwell than in the human heart? for if God is in the

universe, among things inanimate and without conscience, how much more ought He to dwell with our souls ; and our souls, too, seem to be infinite in their cravings ; who but He can satisfy them ? Thus a restless instinct agitates the soul, guiding it dimly to feel that it was made for some definite but unknown relation toward God. Then the soul understands and knows that God is *her* God, dwelling with her more closely than any creature can ; yea, neither stars, nor sea, nor smiling nature hold God so intimately as the bosom of the soul. He becomes the soul of the soul. All nature is ransacked by the Psalmists for metaphors to express this single thought, " God is for my soul, and my soul is for God." Father, Brother, Friend, King, Master, Shepherd, Guide, are common titles. God is their tower, their glory, their rock, their shield, their sun, their star, their joy, their portion, their trust, their life. The Psalmist describes his soul as God's only and favorite child (22 : 20), His darling one. So it is that joy bursts out into praise, and all things look brilliant, and hardship seems easy, and duty becomes delight, and contempt is not felt, and every morsel of bread is sweet. The whole world seems fresh to him with sweetness before untasted. *F. Newman.*

The devout heart yearns after a Personal God. Its instinctive desire is after a Father and a Friend—a loving ear into which its sorrows may be poured—a loving heart on which its weariness may rest. This deep-felt want of our natures is most fully and adequately met in the Person of Jesus Christ. For here is One whom, while we may reverence and adore as God, we can think of as clearly and love as simply, trustingly, tenderly as the best known and loved of our earthly friends. Here we have set before us the Eternal dwelling in time, the Invisible and Spiritual God revealed in that Word of Life which human eyes have seen and human hands have handled. No longer when we read or muse or pray need our minds be at a loss, our thoughts wander forth through eternity in search of a Living God. *Caird.*

To have this God as *our* God—reconciled to us in Christ, to enjoy His favor, to walk with Him as a friend—speaking to Him in prayer and praise, and hearing His voice in His Word and ordinances—to have a meetness for His presence, and the eternal vision and fruition of Him in the world of spirits—these are now the things after which the renewed soul pants. " My soul is athirst for God, for the living God ; when shall I come and appear before God ?" *Goode.*—The " hunger and thirst" of

the Christian soul is a something which is never satisfied, which, the more it receives, desires the more ; which, having tasted that the Lord is gracious, rests not until it tastes again ; which, having found strength for duty in spiritual communion, finds, in the discharge of that duty, the return of a healthful appetite for spiritual communion again. *Monzell.*—The hunger of a Christian soul is now a hunger simply to be like Jesus, a hunger whetted evermore by the vision of Him in His beauty. The conformity of righteousness is desired now, not as conformity to a hard or cold imperative from heaven, but as assimilation through sympathy to the very heart which forever beats and glows in holy love within the Beloved of our hearts. *Dykes.*

Longings and aspirations, weaknesses and woes, the limit of creature helps and loves, the disproportion between us and the objects around us—all these facts of familiar experience do witness, alike by blank misgivings and by bright hopes, by many disappointments and by indestructible expectations surviving them all, that nothing which has a date, a beginning, or an end can fill our souls or give us rest. No matter how you may get on in the world—though you may fulfil every dream with which you began in your youth—you will certainly find that without Christ for your brother and Saviour, God for your friend, and heaven for your hope, life, with all its fulness, is empty. It lasts long, too long as it sometimes seems for work, too long for hope, too long for endurance ; long enough to make love die, and joys wither and fade, and companions drop away ; but without God and Christ you will find it but as a watch in the night. At no moment through the long weary years will it satisfy your whole being ; and when the weary years are all past it will seem to have been but as one troubled moment breaking the eternal silence. At every point so profitless, and all the points making so thin and short a line ! *A. M.*

What, then, does this eagerness in coveting and this impotence in acquiring teach us, but that man originally possessed real happiness, of which nothing is now left to him but the footsteps and empty traces, which he vainly endeavors to replenish with all the abundance that surrounds him ; seeking from absent enjoyments the relief which he finds not in such as are present, and which neither the present nor the absent can bestow on him, because this immense void can only be filled by an infinite and unchangeable object. *Pascal.*

Communion with God is the highest preroga-

tive of spiritual beings. It is the instinctive craving of human souls ; it is the supreme privilege and joy of the religious life ; it is the inspiration and strength of all great service. God redeems us and saves us by drawing us to Himself. By mysterious voices He solicits us ; by irrepressible instincts He impels us ; by subtle affinities He holds us ; by ineffable satisfactions He makes us feel His nearness and fills us with rest and joy. *H. Allon.*

3. Our faith and love are subject to manifold interruptions. The evidence of God's presence is much like the light which shines, now and then, through the crevices of the rifted clouds. The best intercourse of the most favored men with their Maker, in the transfigurations of devotion, is imperfect. It is unsatisfactory, and provokes hungerings and thirstings after some manifestation of God more direct and sensible. Meanwhile this process of spiritual reconciliation and recovery is going on, and the promise of redemption is, that man again shall see the face of his God. Now, partially restored, man sees through a glass darkly, but ultimately his intercourse with his Maker shall be immediate, uninterrupted, direct, and joyful. Through the mighty power of Him who assumed our nature, we shall be as truly reconciled to God, harmonized with Him, and associated with Him, as if the shadow of sin, and fear, and repulsion had never passed upon the soul. *W. Adams.*

4. The act of reflection or self-introversion is expressed by the strong figure of pouring out his soul upon himself, which at the same time suggests the idea of lively emotion ; not necessarily of grief, but of mingled joy and sadness in the recollection of past sufferings and deliverances, just as we might speak of a man's heart being melted, either with sorrow or gratitude, or both. *A.*

I pour out my soul. The expression "pour out" is specially used of the outpouring of the soul in prayer (cf. Psalm 62 : 8 ; 102 title ; 1 Sam. 1 : 15 ; Lam. 2 : 19). *Cook.*—The very soul of prayer lies in the pouring out of the soul before God. *T. Brooks.*—Longing desire prayeth always, though the tongue be silent. If thou art ever longing, thou art ever praying. When sleepeth prayer ? When desire grows cold. *Augustine.*—The Master's benediction is upon those that hunger and thirst after righteousness. It is the longing soul that grows. There are better things before you than you have yet attained. Strive to reach them. It is not easy to rise Christward, heavenward, to advance in the Christian

life, to grow better. Many people are discouraged because they do not appear to themselves to be making advance. But even true longing is growth. It is the soul's reaching godward. *J. R. M.*

Though David was shut out from the sanctuary, yet David's soul was a sanctuary for God ; for God is not tied to a sanctuary made with hands. God hath two sanctuaries, He hath two heavens—the heaven of heavens and a broken spirit. God dwelt in David as in His temple. God was with David and in him ; and He was never more with him nor never more in him than in his greatest afflictions. *Sibbes.*

5. It is the struggle between the spirit of faith and the spirit of dejection, between the higher nature and the lower, between the spirit and the flesh. The true I speaks ; the faith which is born of God rebukes the depression and gloom of his natural infirmity. *P.*—The exceeding beauty of this address to the soul rests upon a deep truth of inward experience. The higher spiritual principle controls and guides the emotions. *Cook.*

Cast down. The form of the verb favors the reflexive sense—a self-produced effect : Why art thou breaking down thine own hopes and courage ? Why indulge such self-depressing thoughts ? The next words carry forward this view : Why such unrest ? such inward anxiety ? such lack of trust ? Hope thou in God ! Poetically the hopeful spirit accosts the desponding one, as if there were two conflicting hearts in his inner being : one lying prone in the dust, borne down in discouragement ; the other lifting its eye upward ; catching a glimpse of the faithful God ; calling upon his fellow to take courage and still hope in God. "For the help of His countenance ;" literally, for the *salvation of His face, i.e.,* for the salvation which His manifested presence will bring. Truly there is salvation in His presence ! When His face shines upon us we are already saved ! *C.*

Hope thou in God. The word which is here rendered "*hope*" denotes that *expectation* which is founded on faith in God, and which leads the soul to *wait* upon Him. The idea is beautifully expressed in Psalm 39 : 7, "And now, Lord, what wait I for ? my hope is in Thee." *Henry March.*—Or, *wait thou for God.* There is a shade of difference between the two words : "to wait" implies patient, submissive expectation, bound up with hope, and indeed a form of hope, but with less of brightness than of resignation. *Cook.*

"This hope was in *God*. The mistake we make," says Robertson, "is to look for a source

of comfort in ourselves ; self-contemplation, instead of gazing upon God ;” and, then, after showing that it is impossible to derive consolation from our own *feelings*, because they are so variable, or from our own *acts*, because in a low state no man can judge of these aright, and warning us that besides, while engaged in this self-inspection, we lose time in remorse, he continues, “ When we gaze on God, then first the chance of consolation dawns. He is not affected by our mutability ; our changes do not alter Him. When we are restless, He remains serene and calm ; when we are low, selfish, mean, or dispirited, He is still the unalterable I am, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. What God is in Himself, not what we may chance to feel Him in this or that moment to be, that is our hope. ‘ My soul, hope thou in God.’ ” P.

To think of what we have to do and to bear in this life is quite likely to be disheartening. To think of God’s sure help in our doing and in our enduring can hardly fail of giving us courage and hope and joy. Many of us know what it is to meet the cares and trials and griefs which we anticipate for the day, even before we are fairly awake in the morning. Through the slowly opening gate of consciousness they flood in upon us like a turbid stream that has been surging without while we slept, impatient for an entrance. By allowing these apprehensions to have the mastery, the new day, God’s special gift to us, is marred at its very beginning ; the wonder of the dawning light passes unnoticed, and the strength of the early hours, which was given us for efficient service, is weakened and half wasted. As an antidote to this joy-poisoning habit our first thoughts of the day should float upward, and our morning greeting to our troubled soul should be, “ Hope thou in God.” Experience shows us that our fears are often only a delusion, prompted by minor difficulties magnified in the morning mist, or by shadows that have no answering substance. On the other hand, we have been shown concerning the cares and trials and griefs which God does appoint for us, that as we look to and trust in Him He furnishes strength and grace to meet them in the hour of their appearing. Our fears may mislead us. Our faith never will. Our troubles may be less than we think for. God’s love is always more. H. C. T.

It is not trouble that troubles but discontent. It is not the water without the ship, but the water that gets within the leak, which drowns it. It is not outward affliction that can make

the life of a Christian sad ; a contented mind would sail above these waters ; but when there is a leak of discontent open, and trouble gets into the heart, then it is disquieted and sinks. Do therefore as the mariners, pump the water out and stop this spiritual leak in thy soul, and no trouble can hurt thee. *Watson.*

6. Still depressed, the Psalmist addresses God directly, laying open his whole case : “ O my God, my soul is fearfully borne down with grief, depression ; Oh, let me remember thee from this far-off land of the Jordan—from these mountains of Hermon. It avails me nothing to brood over my affliction, still turning my eye away from Thee ; let me rather turn toward Thee, my God, and remember Thee from this land of my exile.” The mountains of Hermon were the northeast boundary of Palestine entire. The hill Mizar (the little) seems to have been a special locality in the Hermon range, marking perhaps more definitely the place of his rest at this time. C.

Those Eastern hills were to the Western Israelites the land of exile—the refuge of exiles. From their heights Abner in his flight from the Philistines, and David in his flight from Absalom, and the Israelites on their way to Babylon, and the Christian Jews of Pella caught the last glimpse of their familiar mountains. There is one plaintive strain which sums up all these feelings—the forty-second Psalm. The place is, beyond doubt, the trans-Jordanic hills, which always behold, as they are always beheld from Western Palestine. As before the eyes of the exile the “ gazelle” of the forests of Gilead panted after the fresh streams of water which there descend to the Jordan, so his soul panted after God, from whose outward presence he was shut out. The river with its winding rapids, “ deep calling to deep,” lay between him and his home. All that he could now do was to remember the past, as he stood “ in the land of Jordan,” as he saw the peaks of “ Hermon,” as he found himself on the eastern heights of Mizar, which reminded him of his banishment and solitude. *Stanley.*

The words are indeed those of a man whose soul is bowed down, but their lesson does not encourage despondency, but, on the contrary, hopefulness and peace. The lesson lies in one sentence : “ I will remember Thee.” V.—**Therefore will I remember Thee.** “ Because I am very low in spirit, am deeply sorrowful, *therefore* will I remember Thee. I will remember how condescending Thou art to Thy ‘ poor and afflicted people ;’ how kind and patient to hear their complaint when they pour

out the soul before Thee. I will remember Thy lovingkindness to *me* in seasons past ; how Thou hast looked on my distress, hast heard the voice of my supplications, hast delivered me from my trials, or helped me to bear their burden, strengthening me with strength in my soul. I will remember all that I have enjoyed of Thy presence when waiting on Thee in Thy house, or when celebrating Thy praises there in company with Thy 'saints, the excellent of the earth.' I will remember that Thou art *my* God, that Thou hast manifested Thyself to my soul, that Thou hast enabled me to choose Thee for my portion, that I have trusted in Thee, and have never been confounded. I will remember that word of promise on which Thou hast caused me to hope, to which Thou hast ever been faithful throughout all the past, and *will* be even unto the end." How happy, even in the midst of their unhappiness, are they who in their trials can thus take shelter in God !

7. Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts. Here he has conjoined two awful and terrific phenomena of nature. It is a fact well ascertained by the evidence of travellers, that the falling of waterspouts is not uncommon on the coast of Judea. It should seem that they are occasioned by the congregating of great masses of cloud, whose waters concentrating to a point, pour themselves down in a tremendous column, accompanied with a roaring noise. Now the image conceived in the mind of the Psalmist seems to be that of the rushing of this vast waterspout down into the sea, already agitated, and increasing the turbulence and disorder of its waves. What would be the situation of a vessel in the midst of such a tempest, the deluge pouring down from above, and all around her the furious ocean heaving its tremendous surges—how ungovernable, how helpless, how next to impossible that she should escape foundering except by some almost miraculous interference ! Yet to such a situation does David here compare the state of his soul when submersed, as it were, under a sea of afflictions ; "All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me!" *II. March.*

Were it not for conflicts, what super-excellent use were there in faith ? In daily and ordinary gusts every man of a patient temper or cheerly disposition can hold up his head ; but when a black tempest comes, a tenth wave flows and one deep calls unto another, nature yields, spirit faints, heart fails ; then to stand erect, then to live and reign, that only faith can do which hath the Word for its compass and Christ

at the helm. *Ward.*—It is the night and the tempest which try our faith, which tell us whether or not we have a real faith. And hence it is that those who have passed through deep spiritual experiences, who have known many losses and griefs, if they have improved them, are distinguished by a settled calm which no shock of change disturbs, and at which we of little faith or unready faith can only wonder and admire. The ties which bind them to this visible and temporal world have been detached one by one ; the ties which bind them to the world unseen and eternal have been multiplied and strengthened. Future changes can only detach the few weak links which still bind them to earth ; the treasures they may yet lose will be laid up for them in heaven ; their heart is where their treasure is ; they walk by faith ; their affections are above ; their life is hid with Christ in God. *Cox.*

8. Yet the Lord will command His lovingkindness. He does not say simply that the Lord will bestow, but "*command His lovingkindness.*" As the gift bestowed is grace—free favor to the unworthy ; so the manner of bestowing it is sovereign. It is a royal donative. And if *He* commands the blessing, who shall hinder its reception ? *II. March.*—'Tis all one to a godly man, *night* or *day*. For what *night* can there be to him who hath God always with him, who is a *sun* to comfort him, as well as a shield to protect him ; and *the light of whose countenance*, if it be but very little, is more comfortable than all things else whatsoever that the *day* can bring with it. He can say, "When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." *Z. Bogan.*

For the day God commands "His lovingkindness," for the night He gives "His song." There must be something suitable in each of these provisions to the circumstances, the more so, that similar expressions are found in other passages of Scripture. The "songs of the night" is as favorite a word of the Old Testament as "glory in tribulation" is of the New, and it is one of those which prove that both Testaments have the self-same root and spirit. The lovingkindness of God is a movement—not so much from us to God as from God to us—of which a believing man is not insensible, but toward which his position is more that of a passive recipient. It is God's goodness, like the daylight's gladness, thrown on and around him to lighten up his life. It is a promise which, to a thoughtful man, is very precious. Prosperity without God's favor in it is less than nothing ; but if God's lovingkindness be there,

it is better than life. It brings with it the assurance that all things shall work together for good to the man. It secures this, in the beginning, that he shall have strength for every day's duty. There will be light to guide him in all his walk, and grace to help him in all his work. It secures next that prosperity shall not injure him—"the sun shall not smite him by day." If it be God's gentleness which has made him great, that gentleness shall dwell also within, and make him able to say, "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty." This lovingkindness secures, still further, that prosperity shall have its true enjoyment. God's love gives to a man the very life of life, and bestows on the day that light of which the poet speaks—"a brighter light than ever shone on sea or shore." Every blessing, every happy affection, every tender touch of kindred souls, is a drop from the river of life, and a foretaste of the fountain-head. *Ker.*

The Bible tells us of the streams that it may allure us to the fountain; it tells of the past acts of God's faithful love that we may be led to set our hope on God, and to feel assured that He who hath helped will help, and that He who hath loved will love unto the end. *Thomas Erskine.*—Not only is God supremely worthy of our love, He alone is worthy of it. All that is lovely comes from God; or, rather, all that is lovely *is* God. Holiness, truth, morality, conscience, happiness—names, honored by the respect of all nations and the reflecting men of the greatest genius—words which make the soul of man vibrate with a holy thrill, have no authority which they do not borrow but from Him. Holiness is God's will, truth His thought, happiness His state, morality His law, conscience His representative; and if you go back to the beginning of things, you see all these different routes which religion and sound philosophy have revealed to man, converging more and more toward their Source, and all things finally meeting together in God, the common Centre of all radiance in the whole universe. Since, then, God is your beginning, your centre, your end, your all, give Him your love, your heart, yourselves entirely. *A. Monod.*

My prayer unto the God of my life.

Here may be seen that David's religion was a religion of prayer *after* deliverance, as well as before. The selfish who cry out in trouble will have done with their prayers when the trouble is over. With David it was the very reverse. Deliverance from trouble would strengthen his confidence in God, embolden his addresses to Him, and furnish him with new arguments.

There is great *need* of prayer after deliverance; for the time of deliverance is often a time of temptation; the soul being elated and thrown off its guard. *H. March.*—Every spirit which yearns after God may hold communion with God. And inasmuch as "every man's life is a plan of God," God may make that fellowship serve any purposes He has for the man to fulfil. By such communion there may be an inner life of devotion and an outer life of godliness to be nurtured and sustained; or there may be a spur and a pressure applied to high and holy service; or there may be some clearer light which God wills to impart to and through the soul so communing with Him. *C. C.*

How can the whole soul be so nobly or profitably employed as in holding communion with its Maker? There is no affection of the mind which is not engaged in prayer, except it be the baser and the more depraved ones of our nature. Here is reverential awe stripped of all the baseness of mere fear; here is hope, not the mere hope of earthly bliss, but of the favor of God, which, when enjoyed, is the fullest bliss. Here is faith feeling itself firm and immovable in that being on whom it rests; and here is love kindled at the sight of everlasting love. True prayer quickens the soul without agitating it. It contains within itself its own answer, in the heavenly calm and repose which it communicates to the soul. *McCosh.*—True prayer is earnest, not tiring nor fainting. It takes every burden to God—the small and the large alike. It is submissive, referring all to the Father's will. Its answer may not come in the direct granting of the request we make, but may come instead in more grace and strength, enabling us to keep the burden and yet rejoice. Lying at our Father's feet in the time of our strong cryings and tears, we learn obedience, and our sobbings end in praises, our struggles in acquiescence, our tears are dried, and we rise victorious—not getting our own way, but glad and happy and peaceful in God's way. *J. R. M.*

9. His comfort is that God is his Rock. A Rock to build upon, a Rock to take shelter in; the Rock of ages in whom is everlasting strength would be his Rock, his Strength in the inner man both for doing and suffering. To Him he had access with confidence, to God his Rock he might say what he had to say, and be sure of a gracious audience. *H.*—**Why hast Thou forgotten me?** Not that he supposed he was literally forgotten of God, so as to be given up and abandoned by Him; because he had still sufficient trust in His faithfulness to seek Him for a refuge, and to hope in

His mercy. His expression is to be regarded as the language of feeling, not of judgment. He felt, he seemed, as one forgotten by God. *March.*—It is a sign of true grace when a man seriously complains of the want of grace. Hence a graceless person cannot truly complain that he hath no grace. There is grace in that complaint. *J. Mason.*—This feeling of forsakenness is no proof of being forsaken. Mourning after an absent God is an evidence of love as strong as rejoicing in a present one. Nay, a man may be more decisively the servant of God and goodness while in the anguish of his soul crying for light, than while resting in a common creed, and coldly serving Him. *F. W. R.*

10. Where is thy God? It is the deriding question which persecutors put to the saints in the time of their trials and troubles. But they may return a bold and confident answer, "Our God is here," our God is nigh unto us, our God is round about us, our God is in the midst of us, our God has given us His promise "that He will never leave us nor forsake us." In every trouble, in every danger, in every death, the Lord will be sure to keep us company. *T. Brooks.*

Why disquieted? Every day will have its own evil, and the day's portion which you cannot get rid of will be enough for all the strength which you have to cope with it. And anxiety about the future is vain. After all our careful watching of the heaven, the clouds will rise in an unwatched quarter. Nothing is certain but the unexpected. To-morrow will have its cares in spite of all that anxious care and foreboding can do. And what does our anxiety do? It does not empty to-morrow of its sorrows, but it empties to-day of its strength. It does not give escape from evil, but it makes us unfit to cope with it when it bursts on us. It does not bless to-morrow, and it robs to-day. For every day has its own burden, which is quite heavy enough for the day's strength. Sufficient for each day is the evil which properly belongs to it. *A. M.*—It is distrust of God which lies at the root of unlawful anxiety. A feeble apprehension of God as the agent who overrules everything and determines those causes which lie outside of our reach, and those events which escape our foresight—this it is which shakes the soul with vague uncertainty and fills with causeless alarms the darkness of to-morrow. Because we are "of little faith," therefore are we not content to plan and work, and having planned and wrought, to sit and wait. Like a soothing, cooling breath from a

serener world, there comes down upon the feverish, self-tormenting spirits of men this word of one who was the messenger of Him whom we distrust: "Be not anxious about your life; be not anxious about to-morrow." *Dykes.*

The great and blessed faith in our Father, God, scatters all anxious care. How should we be anxious if we know that we have a Father in heaven, and that He knows our needs? He recognizes our claims on Him. He made the needs, and will send the supply. That is a wide truth, stretching far beyond the mere earthly wants of food and raiment. My wants, so far as God has made me to feel them, are prophecies of God's gifts. He has made them as doors by which He will come in and bless me. How, then, can anxious care fret the heart which feels the Father's presence, and knows that its emptiness is the occasion for the gift of a Divine fulness? Trust is the only reasonable temper for a child of such a Father. Anxious care is a denial of His love or knowledge or power. *A. M.*—Art thou discomposed with impatience, haunted with anxiety? Think it not enough to silence thy heart from quarrelling with God, but leave not till thou canst bring it sweetly to rely on God. Holy David drove it thus far, he did not only chide his soul for being disquieted, but he charges it to trust in God. *Gurnall.*

Hope thou in God. Hope is the great stock of believers, it is that which upholds them under all the faintings and sorrows of their mind in this life, and in their going *through the valley and shadow of death.* It is the *helmet of their salvation*, which, while they are looking over to eternity beyond this present time, covers and keeps their head safe amid all the darts that fly round about them. In present discomfort and darkness of mind and the saddest hours hope is that which keeps up the soul, and is that with which David cheered his soul. *Leighton.*

Health of my countenance. Every finite spirit is inherently related to the infinite, in Him to live, and move, and have its being. It wants the knowledge of God, the society of God, the approbation of God, the internal manifestation of God, a consciousness lighted up by His presence, to receive of His fulness, to be strong in His might, to rest in His love, and be centred everlastingly in His glory. *Bushnell.*

And my God. The same hopeful expression as before, but the addition of "*and my God*" shows that the writer was growing in confidence, and was able defiantly to reply to

the question, "Where is thy God?" Here, even here, He is, ready to deliver me. Thus faith closes the struggle, a victor in fact by anticipation, and in heart by firm reliance. The saddest countenance shall yet be made to shine, if there be a taking of God at His word and an expectation of His salvation. S.

Whether David's songs were composed early or late, the majority of this sweet singer's effusions are the songs of a sufferer, who sings for the convincing reason that he must, if only to soothe his perplexities and calm the agitations of his soul. No singer reaches his best till he sings, in language that thrills and inspires the soul, the eternal Gospel, "Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God: believe also in Christ"—believe also in duty, in progress, in heaven. But for such a mission the singer must, like David, be a sufferer. It is the school of sorrow that makes poets. It is a unique sign of a Davidic Psalm that it is always a real and bold communion with the living and loving personal God. Every poem is a sacrifice. Every line throbs with love. Every verse is a word to God. The aid of biblical song in communion with God is the highest claim the Psalter has upon the gratitude and love of man. J. Clifford.

There are feelings of which we do not speak to each other; they are too sacred and too delicate. Such are most of our feelings to God. If we do speak of them, they lose their fragrance; nay, there is even a sense of indelicacy and exposure. Now the Psalms afford precisely the right relief for this feeling; wrapped up in the forms of poetry and metaphor, that which might seem exaggerated is excused by those who do not feel it; while they who do can apply them without the suspicion of uttering *their own* feelings. Hence their soothing power, and hence, while other portions of Scripture may become obsolete, they remain the most precious parts of the Old Testament. For the heart of man is the same in all ages. This forty-second Psalm contains the utterance of a sorrow of which men rarely speak. There is a grief worse than lack of bread or loss of friends. Men in former times called it spiritual desertion. But at times the utterances of this solitary grief are, as it were, overheard, as in this Psalm. And in a more august agony, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" F. W. R.

The Psalms stand up like a pillar of fire and

light in the history of the early world. They lift us up into an atmosphere of religious thought, which is the highest that man has ever reached; they come with all the characteristic affections and emotions of humanity, everything that is deepest, tenderest, most pathetic, most aspiring, along with all the plain realities of man's condition and destiny, into the presence of the living God. Church.

The forty-second Psalm contains a prescription for a downcast soul, consisting of three ingredients. The first is *Inquiry*. *Why* art thou cast down? Religious despondency must have a cause; and if we can discover it in any case, the old proverb holds good, that a knowledge of the disease is half the cure. Many a man is in great spiritual darkness without knowing or being able to discover the reason. In such cases the question which most vexes a sincere soul is, "Is this state of mind a mark of God's displeasure, or not?" As we shall presently see, it *may* be, but again it may *not* be. For instance, Christians sometimes forget that they have *bodies*; and that the condition of their bodies has a good deal to do with the brightness or darkness of their spiritual moods; and now and then a man, through sheer ignorance, persists in some course of life, some habit of eating or drinking, which, by keeping his body in an unhealthful state, correspondingly lowers the tone of his spiritual life. Often the devil which torments him is one that goeth not out but by fasting. It is a good deal gained when the man has discovered this; when he has found that, by a little attention to his *lower* life, he can get out from among the waves and billows which go over him, and can climb up to the high grounds of spiritual peace and clear-seeing. But the distress *may* arise from estrangement between man and God. One may be among the billows because he has voluntarily tempted them. And no Christian can expect bright outlooks, a clear sense of acceptance with God, a peaceful conscience, who is living in the habitual neglect of known duty, or in the habitual indulgence in known evil. Anything which, under such circumstances, seems like peace and joy in the Holy Ghost is a delusion. Such depressed spiritual states will be very likely to follow the neglect of *prayer*, for instance. The road which leads *to* the closet is the road to hope and to praise. The road which leads *past* the closet leads down to the billows. Or, depression may come from the neglect of the public means of grace. If you cannot, on in-

quiry, discover that *sin* is at the bottom of your disquietude, it may occur to you that *God* has sent it. It is not unlike Him to disquiet those whom He loves sometimes, in the way of His discipline. If, then, He *intended* it for thee, O soul, why art thou disquieted? Is it because thou canst not see the end thy God has in view in thy trial, or wilt thou forget that this "light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh out for thee a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"?

The second ingredient is *remembrance*; and in the Psalm we see this under two aspects: the Psalmist's remembrance of his own experience and his remembrance of God's gracious dealing with others. In the sorrowful passages of Christian life, God often makes use of the memories of His goodness to strengthen and to encourage us. Sometimes a man is so engrossed with the pleasure and business of the present, that memory has no chance to do her work, and he is in danger of forgetting God's benefits altogether; and so God leads him away alone, whither he does not like to go, but where, cut off from the occupations of the present, he has opportunity to survey the rich and fruitful past and to grow grateful amid his sorrow. Yea, often the very land of exile is the land of precious memories. More than one has found the very path where God has caused him to walk in tears most fruitful in memories of blessing.

The third ingredient in the prescription is hope. "Hope thou *in God*." There is nothing like trouble to open a man's eyes to the

need of a *personal* God. In the midst of calamity man's heart cries out for a Father in heaven. "What we want," says one who knew as much as any other man of the deep desolation of sorrow, "is not *infinitude*, but a boundless One; not to feel that love is the *law* of the universe, but to feel One whose name is love; for else, if, in this world of order, there be no one in whose bosom that order is centred, and of whose being it is the expression, then order, affection, contrivance, wisdom, are only horrible abstractions, and we are in the dreary universe alone." (F. W. Robertson.)

Here, then, is God's own prescription for a downcast and disquieted soul. It bids you not to forget gratitude in your sorrow. It bids you remember the wonderful mercies of God, and to strengthen your faith with the thought that He who has wrought so graciously for you and for His people in the past, will be your God forever; your guide even unto death. It bids you *hope*, never losing out of your mind the *disciplinary* purpose of God in all sorrow, and waiting in the confident expectation that "these light afflictions, which are but for a moment," shall work for you "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." If not here, why then by and by. If the clouds do not disperse until the dark river be past, yet you may walk by God's voice though you see not His face; and in the land of eternal light you shall *forever* praise Him, who through all the changes of this mortal life is still your God, and who shall be yours forever. V.

PSALM XLIII.

1 JUDGE me, O God, and plead my cause
against an ungodly nation :
O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust
man.
2 For thou art the God of my strength ; why
hast thou cast me off ?
Why go I mourning because of the oppres-
sion of the enemy ?
3 O send out thy light and thy truth ; let them
lead me :
Let them bring me unto thy holy hill,

And to thy tabernacles.
4 Then will I go unto the altar of God,
Unto God my exceeding joy :
And upon the harp will I praise thee, O God,
my God.
5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul ?
And why art thou disquieted within me ?
Hope thou in God : for I shall yet praise
him,
Who is the health of my countenance, and my
God.

PSALMS 42 and 43 are introduced by Delitzsch under the caption, "Homesickness for Zion in an Enemy's Country." B.—The forty-third Psalm has no title. It is continuous in thought and in its tone of feeling with the Psalm that precedes it. The refrain of Psalm 42 : 6, 12 is repeated in Psalm 43 : 5. These indications show conclusively that the two Psalms are a unit—a single piece of poetic composition, divided by the refrain into three sections. Doubtless there is some reason why they are numbered separately in the Psalter ; for example, the third section may have been written later than the first two sections. But in any case, the third section is homogeneous with the other two, and the unity is unbroken. *W. J. Beecher.*

3. This petition seems to imply a previous exclusion from the sanctuary, and thereby shows that the historical occasion of the Psalm, if not the same, was similar to that of the forty-second. The mention of the tabernacle and the holy hill, *i.e.*, Mount Zion, shows that the Psalm is neither earlier nor later than the times of David and Solomon, before whom there was no holy hill, and after whom there was no tabernacle. This strengthens the presumption that David was himself the author of both Psalms. A.

O send out Thy light and Thy truth ; let them lead me. "Thy light"—to chase away this darkness and to guide me in Thy perfect way. "Thy truth," in the sense here of manifesting Thy faithfulness in the fulfilment of promise. So guided all will be well. C.—He does not say "*Thy light*" simply ; that would be to lose sight of the Word of *truth* ; nor does he say "*Thy truth*" simply ; that would be to lose sight of the Light of the Spirit ; but he exclaims, "O send out Thy

Light and Thy Truth, that they may lead me, and bring me to Thy holy hill, and to Thy dwelling." Both are equally matters of necessity. Here is a body of divinity in a few short lines. The necessity of the light of the Spirit. The necessity of the light of the Word. The necessity of conducting ourselves according to these lights. And finally, the light at the close of such a career, which is the light of glory. E. M. G.

Man is a traveller, his life is a journey, heaven is his end, his road lieth through a wilderness, and he is in the dark. Thus circumstanced, how earnestly and devoutly ought he to pray, "O send out Thy light and Thy truth ; let them lead me, let them bring me to Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles !" For surely, "the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light" (Prov. 6 : 23). If we take this lamp in our hand it will not only point out our course in general, but also direct us in every step, and guide our feet aright in the path of holiness and peace. *Bishop Horne.*—When God sends His light and truth into our hearts, those will guide us to the upper world in all our devotions, as well as in all our aims and expectations ; and if we conscientiously follow that light and that truth, they will certainly bring us to the holy hill above. H.

4. Then will I go unto the altar of God. The approach to God in the holy place was by means of the altar, whence continually ascended the fragrance of the one whole, perfect burnt-offering. That altar now means all the value and everlasting efficacy of the one offering of Christ unto God for us ; and it is in the full power and blessedness thereof that we draw nigh to God. To this unspeakably blessed position, the light and the truth of God

will attract the child of God. Toward this altar all the rays of the light of Divine favor and grace, and of Divine truth and holiness, have from eternity converged; and from this point they shine forth toward and upon the soul and heart of the penitent, attracting him to that altar where he may meet his God. *J. Offord.*

God my exceeding joy, literally, "the God of the joy of my exultation," source and sustainer of all gladness and bliss; a singularly emphatic combination, such as Paul delights in. *Cook.*—Those that come unto God must come to Him as their exceeding joy, not only as their future bliss but as their present joy; and that not a common but an exceeding joy, far exceeding all the joys of sense and time. The phrase in the original is very emphatical—*unto God the gladness of my joy*, or of my triumph. Whatever we rejoice or triumph in, God must be the joy of it; all our joy in it must terminate in Him, and must pass through the gift to the Giver. When we come to God as our exceeding joy, our comforts in Him must be the matter of our praises to Him as God, and our God. *H.*—The *joy of worship* is common to all believers. It is in worship that exalted views of God are obtained. Meditation may lay the wood and the offering; but devotion kindles the fire of the altar. To pray to such a God, so beheld, is to rise in joyfulness toward heaven. To praise Him, under any true apprehension of His excellency, is joy unspeakable and full of glory. *J. W. A.*

Will praise Thee. Let the soul that has long lain face downward, self-centred in its sorrows, look up and away from its own darkness to God's light, from its own wants to God's fulness, from its own sin to the grace that abounds more exceedingly; let it lay down its burden and take up a song; and in the very effort to praise God it will mount up on wings as an eagle to a serene atmosphere and an ineffable light. It will praise God for His mercies to others, for His unspeakable gift, for His exceeding great and precious promises, for the revelation of His grace and glory, and above all, for what He is in Himself, in the plenitude, the perfection, and the blessedness of His own being. *H. J. V.*—Since I may, I will wear the angel look of cheerfulness and live in the light of God. When I know that I have a Father in heaven who watches over me, who forgives my sin, who strengthens every holy purpose in me, provides for all my needs, cares for me in all my cares, supports and guides me, and by acts of tenderest love and promises of everlasting blessedness allures and draws me

toward His heart and home, why should I not be cheerful as my life is long? *A. Raleigh.*

Man will not be satisfied with family, or friendship, or acquaintance. Fresh vistas of humanity are ever opening before him, and each new friend becomes a new point of departure for the extension of his influence to a wider circle still. His motive may vary, but the instinct remains the same, and is simply the instinct to wider, deeper, more intense communion with his fellow-men. And yet, as before, its very unrest is but the measure of its failure. We are more severed from humanity than ever we were from external nature, and if the world is our prison, our fellow men are our jailers. And so in our loneliness we look within and try to find refuge in an ideal world, but only to find schism and severance in the recesses of our inmost being. We are farther off from our ideals than even from nature and mankind. All this is a fact, and a fact as universal as human experience; and Christianity, beyond other creeds, has faced and interpreted the fact. Nature, and society, and the thoughts of our hearts were created by a Person, and created for Himself; and our feelings of separation from the world and its inhabitants, and even from the inner vision of our own ideal self, are but symptoms of alienation from the Person in whom they exist. *J. R. Illingworth.*—No *things* can satisfy a living soul. No accumulation of dead matter can become the life of an immortal being. The two classes are separated by the whole diameter of the universe—matter and spirit, thing and person; and *you* cannot feed yourself upon the dead husks that lie there round about you—wealth, position, honor. Books, thoughts, though they are nobler than these other, are still inefficient. Principles, "causes," emotions springing from truth, these are not enough. I want more than that, I want something to love, something to lay a hand upon, that shall return the grasp of the hand. A living man must have a living God, or his soul will perish in the midst of earthly plenty, and will thirst and die while the water of earthly delights is running all around him. We are made to need *persons*, not *things*! And we need *one* Being who shall be all-sufficient. We want a *being*, and we want *one Being* in whom shall be sphered all perfection, in whom shall abide all power and blessedness; beyond whom thought cannot pass, out of whose infinite circumference love does not need to wander; besides whose boundless treasures no other riches can be required; who is light for the understanding, power for the will, authority for the

practical life, purpose for the efforts, motive for the doings, end and object for the feelings, home of the affections, light of our seeing, life of our love, the love of our heart, the one living God, infinite in wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth; who is all in all, and without whom everything else is misery. A. M.

5. The two voices (of despondency and trust), which at the beginning stand out in entire discord and almost harsh antagonism (vs. 2-4), are at last brought into loving harmony, so that emotion and insight, excitement and thoughtfulness are wholly reconciled, and are intimately blended. All this without artifice or constraint; the true expression of the struggles between two contending forces in a spirit at once susceptible to tenderest feeling, yet upon reflection full of strength. The art consists wholly in the highest naturalness, and the purest inspiration. The imagery also in all its details is in the highest degree tender and poetical. *Ewald.*

Hope thou in God. There are hours in which physical derangement darkens the windows of the soul; days in which shattered nerves make life simply endurance; months and years in which intellectual difficulties, pressing for solution, shut out God. Then faith must be replaced by hope. "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." "Clouds and darkness are round about Him: *but* righteousness and truth are the habitation of His throne." "My soul, hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him." F. W. R.

Who is the health of my countenance, and my God. Till you can say that, you must always be the slave of circumstances and the prey of every kind of temptation and distress; but when your faith is high enough to enable you to feel that all the sunshine that plays in your face is a reflection of the light of God's countenance, and that not only the gifts, but the Giver is yours, then that "my God" will carry you on, and bear you up, superior to all the vexations of life; and the possession of God will be the dispossession of care. *J. Vaughan.*—He considers our need, and His help comes as constantly as the light of the sun by day. He is never removed from us nor we from Him. We cannot pass out of God—beyond the sphere of His omniscience and omnipotence, and therefore can never pass the limits where His help may not swifter than thought reach us. When stricken with pain, when overwhelmed with grief, when our life is going out in agony, when we have

passed clear beyond the region where human help avails, God may be helping us. Help from God is not intermittent, it is not dependent on outward circumstances, nor upon personal health—it is not a varying quantity, but an unvarying one. We may go forth to duty, to toil, and struggle, we may go up into our chambers and lie down upon our sick and dying-beds, we may go out upon the untried scenes of eternity, relying upon it as surely as we may rely on the sun or the tides. That help, when we have sought it in the proper way, and with the proper spirit, will no more be wanting to us than the earth will fail us to tread upon—nay, it will be operative when all material things shall have passed away. *J. Drummond.*

The proper and natural effect, and in the absence of all disturbing or intercepting forces, the certain and sensible accompaniment of peace (or reconciliation) with God, is our own inward peace, a calm and quiet temper of mind. This peace which we have with God in Christ is inviolable; but because the sense and persuasion of it may be interrupted, the soul that is truly at peace with God may for a time be disquieted in itself, through weakness of faith, or the strength of temptation, or the darkness of desertion, losing sight of that grace, that love and light of God's countenance, on which its tranquillity and joy depend. *Leighton.*—Why should we trouble ourselves about altering these varying events, since each in its turn is a manifestation of His mind and will; each in its turn is a means of discipline for us; and through all their variety a single purpose works, which tends to a single end—"that we should be partakers of His holiness." And that is the one point of view from which we can bear to look upon the world and not be utterly bewildered and overmastered by it. Calmness and central peace are ours; a true appreciation of all outward good and a charm against the bitterest sting of outward evils are ours; a patient continuance in the place where He has set us is ours—when by fellowship with Him we have learned to look upon our work as primarily doing His will, and upon all our possessions and conditions primarily as means for making us like Himself. A. M.

The state of the most advanced Christians is often very unsatisfactory. The affections that, true as the needle to the pole, should point steadily to heaven, go wheeling about like a weather vane that shifts with shifting winds. Sinful thoughts and bad desires spring up, and every attempt to keep the heart pure, holy, heavenly, ends in miserable failure, extorting

the question, "Who is sufficient for these things?" There is no appreciable progress; and we begin to ask, Are we never to grow fit for heaven? Is our hope of it but a pious dream, a beautiful delusion? Daily called to contend with temptation, the battle often goes against us; in these passions, and tempers, and old habits are too strong for us. Not that we do not fight, but too often resisting only to be conquered, we are ready to give up the struggle, saying, It is useless. We would; but that, cheered by a voice from above and sustained by hope in God's grace and mercy, we can turn to our souls to say, Why art thou cast down, my soul; why is my spirit disquieted

within me?—rise; resume thy arms; renew the combat; never surrender! "Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." *Guthrie.*

Let this pair of beautiful Psalms suggest the blessedness of having such a God, the Refuge of our soul in trouble, the exceeding joy of our heart in the day of our deliverance! It is no mean occasion of thanksgiving that God gave His servant David such experiences and then caused them to be sent down to us in this sacred record for our example and edification. Let none of us fail to have like trust in God in the days of our affliction and equal joy and gratitude for the salvations of His presence! C.

PSALM XLIV.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN; A PSALM OF THE SONS OF KORAH. MASCHIL.

1 WE have heard with our ears, O God, our
fathers have told us,
What work thou didst in their days, in the
days of old.
2 Thou didst drive out the nations with thy
hand, and plantedst them in;
Thou didst afflict the peoples, and didst
spread them abroad.
3 For they gat not the land in possession by
their own sword,
Neither did their own arm save them:
But thy right hand, and thine arm, and the
light of thy countenance,
Because thou hadst a favour unto them.
4 Thou art my King, O God:
Command deliverance for Jacob.
5 Through thee will we push down our adver-
saries:
Through thy name will we tread them un-
der that rise up against us.
6 For I will not trust in my bow,
Neither shall my sword save me.
7 But thou hast saved us from our adversaries,
And hast put them to shame that hate us.
8 In God have we made our boast all the day
long,
And we will give thanks unto thy name for
ever. [Selah
9 But now thou hast cast *us* off, and brought
us to dishonour;

And goest not forth with our hosts.
10 Thou makest us to turn back from the ad-
versary:
And they which hate us spoil for them-
selves.
11 Thou hast given us like sheep *appointed* for
meat;
And hast scattered us among the nations.
12 Thou sellest thy people for nought,
And hast not increased *thy wealth* by their
price.
13 Thou makest us a reproach to our neigh-
bours,
A scorn and a derision to them that are
round about us.
14 Thou makest us a byword among the na-
tions,
A shaking of the head among the peoples.
15 All the day long is my dishonour before me,
And the shame of my face hath covered me,
16 For the voice of him that reproacheth and
blasphemeth;
By reason of the enemy and the avenger.
17 All this is come upon us; yet have we not
forgotten thee,
Neither have we dealt falsely in thy cove-
nant.
18 Our heart is not turned back,
Neither have our steps declined from thy
way,

19 That thou hast sore broken us in the place
of jackals,
And covered us with the shadow of death.
20 If we have forgotten the name of our God,
Or spread forth our hands to a strange god ;
21 Shall not God search this out ?
For he knoweth the secrets of the heart.
22 Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day
long ;
We are counted as sheep for the slaughter.

23 Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord ?
Arise, cast *us* not off for ever.
24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face,
And forgettest our affliction and our oppres-
sion ?
25 For our soul is bowed down to the dust .
Our belly cleaveth unto the earth.
26 Rise up for our help,
And redeem us for thy lovingkindness'
sake.

THERE is scarcely any Psalm which seems at first sight to furnish a more decided clew to the probable date of its composition than this, and yet leaves us, after all, in so much uncertainty. The notes of time are apparently three : The conquest of Palestine was looked back upon as distant—"the times of old." The period was a period of great national distress ; the people were hard pressed by enemies. All this had come on them *not* as a judgment for national sin ; hence the age must have been one when the nation was holding fast to the worship of Jehovah and eschewing idolatry. This last circumstance is so peculiar that we might expect it to decide the question. Now we know of no period of Jewish history previous to the exile, when the assertion would be true that the people had not forgotten God, nor "stretched out their hands to any strange god." Hence many interpreters refer the Psalm to the time of the Maccabees, and the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes (2 Macc. 5 : 11-23). The nation was then free from the taint of idolatry, and it suffered cruelly. So far as the internal evidence goes, it is unquestionably in favor of this period.

The Psalm consist of four principal divisions : 1. The sacred poet calls to mind the great deeds which God had wrought for His people in the days of old. God alone, he confesses, had given them possession of the land of Canaan, and had driven out their enemies before them. Remembering this, they had ever made their boast in His name, and would still continue to praise Him (vs. 1-8). 2. Most painful is the contrast of the present with the past. God has forgotten His people. He has given them over into the hand of enemies, who hate and insult and slay them. God goes not forth now with their armies, as He had done when He brought them into Canaan ; they are scattered among the heathen and sold for nought (vs. 9-16). 3. And yet this cannot be a chastisement for their transgressions ; for they have not forgotten God, but, on the contrary, die

the death of martyrs for His truth (vs. 17-22). 4. Therefore he prays that God the Saviour of His people, and the giver of victory, would again be favorable unto them, as of old, and redeem them from their enemies (vs. 23-26).

1. The Psalm opens with a glance at the past history of the nation, and the acknowledgment that from the first every victory which they had won had been won not by their own strength, but by the immediate hand of God. This was, it might be said, the perpetual lesson of their history. *P.*

What work Thou didst. While the songs of other nations sing of the heroism of their ancestors, the songs of Israel celebrate the works of *God*. *Tholuck*.—Those who are taught to see God in history have learned a good lesson from their fathers, and no son of believing parents should be left in ignorance of so holy an art. A nation tutored as Israel was in a history so marvellous as their own, always had an available argument in pleading with God for aid in trouble, since He who never changes gives in every deed of grace a pledge of mercy yet to come. The traditions of our past experience are powerful pleas for present help. *S.*

3. God's love to Israel was free, unmerited, and amazing, and He gave them a land for which they did not labor, and cities which they built not, and vineyards and oliveyards which they planted not. Since the fall of Adam all good things in the lot of any mere man are undeserved kindnesses. *Plumer*.

6. The less confidence we have in ourselves or in anything beside God, the more evidence have we of the sincerity of our faith in God. *Dickson*.

8. *Let him that glories, glory in the Lord*, and let that forever exclude all other boasting. Let those that trust in God make their boast in Him, for they know whom they have trusted ; let them *boast in Him all the day long*, for it is a subject that can never be exhausted. But let them withal praise His name forever ; if they

have the comfort of His name, let them give unto Him the glory due to it. H.

9-14. Calvin's remark is of importance, as bearing on all this attributing of their calamities to God: "We must observe, however, that God is represented as the author of these calamities, not by way of reproaching him, but that the faithful may with the more confidence seek the remedy from the hand which hath smitten and wounded." P.

17, 18. It is not supposable that the Psalmist meant to say that his people had been faultless before God, for this would imply that God had forsaken and chastened them without cause. He might, however, say that they had not apostatized in such a degree as to forfeit their relation to God as His people. Their heart still turned toward their God, and recognized His covenant with them. C.—What is here professed is not entire exemption from all acts of infidelity, but freedom from the deadly sin of total oblivion and apostasy. In spite of His unfaithfulness, Israel still claimed to be and was the chosen people of Jehovah. A.—We may the better bear our troubles, how pressing soever, if in them we still hold fast our integrity. While our troubles do not drive us from our duty to God, we should not suffer them to drive us from our comfort in God; for He will not leave us, if we do not leave Him. H.

20, 21. If we slacken our service to God, or fall off to any degree of apostasy, the Judge of hearts knoweth all; God knoweth whether we would have depraved and corrupt doctrine, worship, or ordinances; or whether we will faithfully adhere to Him, to His Word, and worship, and ordinances, whatever it cost us. *Manton.*—Three points suggested here: 1. The sin—forgetting God and holding up the hands to some strange god. These are not two sins, but one and the same sin, contemplated first upon one side and then upon the other.

2. The certainty of the discovery and punishment of the sin. "Shall not God search it out?" God will search out these idols, these strange gods to which we lift up our hands, rendering to them the service, the love, the fealty, the affection, which we justly owe to Him, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 3. The ground of this certainty, because He with whom we have to do is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of man. The one great lesson is to beware of idols. *Trench.*

22. For Thy sake. This passage is cited by Paul (Rom. 8:36), apparently from the LXX, in illustration of the fact that the Church of God has in all ages been a persecuted Church. But there is this remarkable difference between the tone of the Psalmist and the tone of the apostle. The former cannot understand the chastening, complains that God's heavy hand has been laid without cause upon His people; the latter can rejoice in persecutions also, and exclaim, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us." P.—The whole verse is a strong poetical description of severe persecution or distress arising from the spite of enemies, and as such is applied by Paul to the sufferings of the Church of Christ, in which the ancient Israel continues to exist.

23. Arouse Thee! Why wilt Thou sleep, oh Lord? Awake, do not cast off forever. This bold apostrophe implies strong faith as well as warm affection. Such an address would not be made to an inanimate object or an imaginary being. The idea is, that the withholding of God's help or of His sensible presence may be figuratively described as a state of inaction or of sleep, from which He awakes and arises when He once more manifests His presence and affords His aid. The verse is therefore really nothing more than an importunate petition for Divine assistance. A.

PSALM XLV.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN ; SET TO SHOSHANNIM ; A PSALM OF THE SONS OF KORAH. MASCHIL.
A SONG OF LOVES.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1 My heart overfloweth with a goodly matter :
I speak the things which I have made touching the king :
My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.</p> <p>2 Thou art fairer than the children of men ;
Grace is poured into thy lips :
Therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.</p> <p>3 Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O mighty one,
Thy glory and thy majesty.</p> <p>4 And in thy majesty ride on prosperously,
Because of truth and meekness <i>and</i> righteousness :
And thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.</p> <p>5 Thine arrows are sharp ;
The peoples fall under thee ;
<i>They are</i> in the heart of the king's enemies.</p> <p>6 Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever :
A sceptre of equity is the sceptre of thy kingdom.</p> <p>7 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness :
Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee
With the oil of gladness above thy fellows.</p> <p>8 All thy garments <i>smell of</i> myrrh, and aloes,
<i>and</i> cassia ;
Out of ivory palaces stranged instruments
have made thee glad.</p> <p>9 Kings' daughters are among thy honourable women :</p> | <p>At thy right hand doth stand the queen in
gold of Ophir.</p> <p>10 Harken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear ;
Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house ;</p> <p>11 So shall the king desire thy beauty :
For he is thy Lord ; and worship thou him.</p> <p>12 And the daughter of Tyre <i>shall be there</i> with
a gift ;
Even the rich among the people shall intreat
thy favour.</p> <p>13 The king's daughter within <i>the palace</i> is all
glorious :
Her clothing is inwrought with gold.</p> <p>14 She shall be led unto the king in brodered
work :
The virgins her companions that follow her
Shall be brought unto thee.</p> <p>15 With gladness and rejoicing shall they be
led :
They shall enter into the king's palace.</p> <p>16 Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children,
Whom thou shalt make princes in all the
earth.</p> <p>17 I will make thy name to be remembered in
all generations :
Therefore shall the peoples give thee thanks
for ever and ever.</p> |
|--|---|

THIS Psalm is evidently a marriage-song, composed for some day of royal espousals. It celebrates the nuptials of a Jewish king with a princess, apparently of foreign extraction ; but in honor of what particular king it was written is matter of conjecture. The older, and perhaps the more common interpretation, refers it to Solomon's nuptials with the daughter of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. But "a greater than Solomon is here." Evident as it is that much of the language of the poem is only properly applicable to the circumstances of the royal nuptials which occasioned it, it is no less evident that much of it greatly transcends them. The outward glory of Solomon was but a type

and a foreshadowing of a better glory to be revealed. Israel's true king was not David or Solomon, but One of whom they, at the best, were only faint and transient images. A righteous One was yet to come who should indeed rule in truth and equity, who should fulfil all the hopes which one human monarch after another, however fair the promise of his reign, had disappointed, and whose kingdom, because it was a righteous kingdom, should endure forever. Such a ruler would indeed be the vicerent of God. In such an one, and by such an one, God would reign. He would be of the seed of David, and yet more glorious than all his fellows ; human, and yet above men. It

was because of this wonderfully close and real relation between God and man—a relation which the true king would visibly symbolize—that the Psalmist could address him as God. In him God and man would, in some mysterious manner, meet. This perhaps he did see; more than this he could not see. P.

This Psalm celebrates the nuptials of an anointed king. It describes him as beautiful and gracious, blessed forevermore; as a conqueror, whose objects are truth, humility, and righteousness; as a Divine person, bearing the name of God, seated on an everlasting throne, ruling in righteousness, anointed with the oil of gladness, received with the strains of harps in ivory palaces; his bride is a king's daughter, one of a foreign race, beautiful and glorious; her attendants are pure virgins; her children are to be princes in all the earth. Cook.

That this Psalm is Messianic has been the doctrine of those who have held the Word of God in hand and in honor throughout all the ages. The Chaldee Targum on v. 2 has this: "Thy beauty, O King Messiah, is greater than of the sons of men." With this the Jewish Rabbis accord. The voice of the early Christian Church may be given in the words of Theodoret: "This is a Psalm for the beloved, *i.e.*, for the beloved Son of God." The writer to the Hebrews gives his emphatic indorsement by quoting vs. 6, 7 entire as the words of God to His Son (1: 8, 9)—"But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever," etc. The superlative beauty of this King is in the *grace of His lips*; He is the oracle of God to man—"never man spake like this man." He came from heaven to earth to bring us words from God, and therefore is significantly called, *The Word*. He rides forth in majesty, not because of personal beauty, or martial prowess, or muscular strength, or majestic mien, but "because of truth, meekness, and righteousness." It is because He loves righteousness and hates wickedness that his God anoints Him, *i.e.*, makes Him His Anointed One, the true Messiah, far above all other anointed kings of the Theocracy. And finally, His children are to be princes in all the earth, and His name shall be remembered through all generations, Himself an object of praise from all the people forever and ever. Verily no personage less than Jesus the Messiah is here, King of kings and Lord of lords. "His kingdom an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion that which knows no end. C.

The nuptial song of Christ and the Church, which has for its peculiar theme the home-

bringing of Christ's elect, that they may be joined to Him in a union that shall survive the everlasting hills. W. Binnie.—Under this delicate symbol is pictured the love of Christ for His Church. He admits her to the most near, loving, confidential communion; He elevates her to His own dignity and honor; and He will hereafter bestow upon her the full blessedness of His presence, the full glory of His kingdom. J. P. T.—The distinguishing peculiarity of the Psalm is vividly presented in the New Testament account of Christ and His Church. He is the bridegroom and His people are the bride (John 3: 29). The marriage relation is used again and again to denote the mystical union between the Saviour and His chosen; and in the new heavens and new earth the body of the redeemed is said to be "made ready as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21: 2). The Praise-book of Israel abounds with the praises of God, but never of man. Not a solitary lyric records the exploits of any ancient worthy. David's beautiful elegy on Saul and Jonathan is kept on historical record, but not among the Psalms. In this respect the Psalter stands alone in the literature of the world. It has frequent references to the nation and to its great leaders, but never in express laudation. That is reserved for God alone. T. W. C.

TITLE. *To the chief musician. Upon lilies. To the sons of Korah. Maschil. A song of loved (ones).* The unusual accumulation of descriptive titles in this verse suggests at once that the Psalm is one of deep and solemn import, and thus raises a presumption against its being a mere epithalamium, or a secular poem of any kind. This presumption is confirmed by the inscription *to the chief musician*, implying that the Psalm was designed for permanent and public use. The same thing is true, in substance, of the next term, *maschil, instruction*. The Psalm before us is among the last which would have been selected by a modern critic as didactic in its character. The same thing is rendered still more certain by the ascription *to the sons of Korah*, whether as authors or performers, since in either character their function was a sacred one, as precentors in the temple worship. *A song of loves*, the usage of the Hebrew word requires to be taken in the concrete sense of *loved* or *beloved*, the plural feminine form serving to identify the persons thus described with the *lilies* of the other clause. These two phrases taken together represent the subject of the Psalm to be lovely and beloved women, while the other three terms of the de-

scription show that the love and marriage here referred to are not natural but spiritual—to wit, the union of Messiah with His people, or of Christ with His Church, an idea running through both Testaments. On the whole, then, this Psalm appears to be a description of Messiah in His conjugal relation both to Israel and other nations, composed either by or for the sons of Korah in the reign of Solomon, from which the imagery seems to be borrowed, and designed for the permanent instruction of the Church by being used as a vehicle of pious feeling in her public worship. A.

1. This verse is a kind of preface of a very unusual kind in Hebrew poetry, in which the singer tells how great is his subject, and how full his heart is of it. P.—*My heart has overflowed—a good word (am) I saying—my works for the king—my tongue the pen of a rapid writer.* The whole verse is a strong metaphorical description of the way in which his thoughts were engrossed, and his words suggested by one great theme. A.—*A good word, i.e., a beautiful utterance, a hymn full of goodness and joy, gushing out from the full heart.* Cook.

“My heart boils up (and overflows) with a good thing.” My emotions are stirred to their depths with ravishing thoughts of the glorious king and his beautiful bride. “I am to utter the song I have prepared concerning the king; my tongue is the pen of a swift writer,” for my heart is so full of thoughts, rich and beautiful, I have only to open my lips and they pour forth fast as the most rapid pen can write them. A wonderful exordium truly, indicating the profound interest which filled and stirred the soul of this poet-prophet. C.—**Touching the king.** It does not all concern the king immediately, for much of it concerns the queen, and about one half of it is directly addressed to her. But it relates to him inasmuch as it relates to his family. Christ ever identifies Himself with His people; so that whatever is done to them is done to Himself. Their interests are His. G. Harpur.

2. *Beautiful, beautiful, art Thou above the sons of man; grace is poured into Thy lips; therefore God hath blessed Thee to eternity.* The first word in Hebrew is a reduplicated form, expressing the idea with intensity and emphasis. He is not praised as the fairest or most beautiful of men, but as fair or beautiful beyond all human standard or comparison. This general ascription of all loveliness is followed by the specification of a single charm, that of delightful, captivating speech. Grace, in Hebrew as

in English, denotes both a cause and an effect; in this case, grace or beauty of expression, produced by the Divine grace or favor, and reciprocally tending to increase it. On any hypothesis, except the Messianic one, this verse is unintelligible. If the first clause were intended to describe a mere corporeal beauty, how could this be followed up by commending the grace of the lips, or either be recognized as the ground of an eternal blessing? It is only by supposing that the person here meant is the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely, that the beauty predicated of him includes every moral and spiritual attraction, and that the grace of his lips has reference to his prophetic character and office, that the sentence can be made to seem coherent, and the promise at its close appropriate. A.

The beauty of the king is placed first with peculiar fitness in a bridal hymn; but the beauty here spoken of is a Divine attribute; the word is the same in derivation as that applied to Jehovah (Psalm 50:2), but even stronger in its form, which occurs in no other passage. Beauty was regarded by the Hebrew as the outward manifestation of inherent nobleness, or of a nature akin to the Divine. In this case the beauty is expressly said to be above that of man, an expression which marks the object of the hymn, as One standing apart from and above those whose nature He shares. The representation is unquestionably ideal; it refers to the Messiah. (Compare Isa. 33:17.) Thus the Chaldee paraphrast, “Thy beauty, O King Messiah, is greater than that of the sons of men.” **Grace.** The grace of sweetness, loveliness, all that is attractive and gracious in expression, has its seat upon the lips of the King; from such lips none but gracious words can flow; the anointing Spirit dwells upon them (cf. Luke 4:18, 22), where the word is used with special reference to Isa. 61:1-3. **Therefore.** The blessing is inseparable from the spiritual gifts and graces visibly represented in the person of the glorified Messiah; such a declaration would hardly have been made of a mere earthly king. Cook.

The beauty of the monarch first calls forth the poet's praise, and then his *persuasive* eloquence. Calvin observes, it were more kingly for kings to win their subjects' hearts by gracious words than to rule them by brute force. So, too, of the Great Antitype, the true King, we read that men wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His lips; for the Lord had given Him the tongue of the learned, that He might know how to speak a word in

season to them that were weary (Isa. 50 : 4). P.—Kingly courtesy and kingly graciousness of word must be the characteristic of the Sovereign of men. The abundance of that bestowment is expressed by that word “poured.” We need only remember, “All wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth,” or how even the rough instruments of authority were touched and diverted from their appointed purpose, and came back and said, “Never man spake like this man.” A. M.

He has grace, and He has it for us. By His Word, His promise, His Gospel, the *good will of God* is made known to us, and the *good work of God* is begun and carried on in us. He received all grace from God, all the endowments that were requisite to qualify Him for His work and office as Mediator, that from His fulness we might receive. H.—In one Christ we may contemplate and must confess all the beauty and loveliness both of heaven and earth; the beauty of heaven is God, the beauty of earth is man; the beauty of heaven and earth together is this God-man. E. Hyde.—Never were there such words of love and sweetness spoken by any man as by Him; never was there such a loving and tender heart as the heart of Jesus Christ: “*Grace was poured into His lips.*” Certainly never were there such words of love, sweetness, and tenderness spoken here upon this earth as those last words of His which were uttered a little before His sufferings, and are recorded in the thirteenth to the seventeenth chapters of John. J. Row.

3, 4. The martial genius of the age of David appears in this figure, the sword girded on the thigh; and yet the glory of this King marching forth in triumph lies not in routed armies and heaps of the slain; not in cities laid desolate, wives made widows, and children fatherless; but in “truth, meekness, and righteousness.” He comes to bring to men most blessed truth concerning their Great Father; to turn them from darkness, delusion, and crime, to light, truth, and love. C.

4. The King goes forth, “conquering and to conquer” (Rev. 6 : 2). **Because of,** *i.e.*, for the sake of truth, and the meekness which is one with righteousness. The combination of the two words meekness and righteousness is marked by a singular construction in the Hebrew; the two attributes are, so to speak, identified. The one object of the wars of God’s Anointed is to make the attributes incarnate in Him triumphant (cf. Zech. 9 : 9). Cook.—His *truth, meekness, and righteousness* are His glory and majesty, and because of these He shall

prosper. Men are brought to believe on Him because He is true, to learn of Him because He is meek, the gentleness of Christ is of mighty force. Men are brought to submit to Him because He is righteous, and rules with equity. The Gospel, as far as it prevails with men, sets up in their hearts *truth, meekness, and righteousness*, rectifies their mistakes by the light of truth, controls their passions by the power of meekness, and governs their hearts and lives by the laws of righteousness. H.

4, 5. The poet desires that the king whom he celebrates may reign and triumph in a Messianic manner, that he may help forward truth and what is truly good and overcome the enmity of the world, or, as it is expressed in Psalm 2, that the divinely anointed King of Zion may with the sceptre of iron dash to pieces everything that resists. D.

6. *Thy throne, (oh) God, (is) forever and ever; a sceptre of rectitude (is) the sceptre of Thy kingdom.* To avoid the obvious ascription of divinity contained in the first clause, two very forced constructions have been proposed. 1. Thy throne (is the throne of) God forever and ever. 2. Thy God-throne (or Divine throne) is forever. The explanation of *God* as a vocative is not only the most obvious, and sustained by many analogies, but is found in all the ancient versions and adopted in the New Testament (Heb. 1 : 8), and was admitted even by the anti-Messianic interpreters, until they were obliged to abandon the position that *Elohim* might be taken in a lower sense. A.—The person before the Psalmist’s mind was a visible manifestation of the Godhead; the ideal King of whom his earthly sovereign was an imperfect type. The objection that the Messiah is never called God or addressed as God in the Old Testament begs the entire question, and is untrue (see Isa. 8 : 8, “O Immanuel”). Other explanations of this passage are contrary to its plain and literal meaning. Cook.

The Messiah is addressed *as God*. This is really the case in v. 7 as well as in v. 6. “Therefore, O God, hath Thy God anointed Thee,” etc. This is repeated by Isaiah (9 : 6): “His name shall be called the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father.” His throne is eternal; forever and ever. Other kingdoms, the mightiest and proudest ever reared by mortals, are transient; the face of the world is strewn with their ruins; but this kingdom shall never collapse; no chronicler in the ages never so distant shall have to speak of its fall; no explorer shall traverse and survey its ruins. Beautifully it shall be thus enduring and imperishable be-

cause it is righteous ; “ the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.” C.

7. God, Thy God. The old Versions and most interpreters take “ God” and “ Thy God” to be in apposition. The construction, however, is unusual, and the more natural interpretation would be, “ Therefore, O God, Thy God hath anointed Thee.” This agrees with the preceding verse, “ Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever.” *Cook.*—“ Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness ; therefore, O God, hath Thy God anointed Thee with joy” more than any of Thy associate kings on the throne of Israel from whom the Messiah is thought of as coming forth. Precisely this is the strain of argument in Isa. 11 : 1-9 ; “ the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him ;” “ He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes ;” “ with righteousness shall He judge the poor ;” “ with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked ;” therefore men “ shall not hurt nor destroy in all this holy mountain,” etc. C.

Thy God. Christ, as Mediator, called God *His God* (John 20 : 17), as commissioned by Him, and the Head of those that are taken into covenant with Him. He has *anointed Thee with the oil of gladness.* “ In order to this righteous government of thine, God has given Thee His Spirit, that Divine unction, to qualify Thee for thine undertaking.” Isaiah 61 : 1—*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me.* He was anointed with the Spirit above all his fellows, above all those that were anointed, whether priests or kings. H.

Thy fellows. In these words you have two parts—namely, first, *the saints’ dignity* ; and, secondly, *Christ’s pre-eminency.* *The saints’ dignity* consists in this, that they are Christ’s “ fellows.” Doth the Spirit of holiness dwell in Him ? So He doth in them, too. Is Christ King and Priest ? So are they, too, by the grace of union with Him. He hath made us kings and priests to God and His Father. This is the saints’ dignity, to be Christ’s fellows, consorts, or co-partners. But whatever *dignity* is ascribed herein to the saints, there is and still must be a *pre-eminency* acknowledged and ascribed to Christ ; if they are anointed with the spirit of grace, much more abundantly is Christ : “ God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows” *Flavel.*

8. The song here reaches its culminating point in the description of the king. It has portrayed the king as man, as warrior, as god-like ruler ; now it pictures him as bridegroom on the day of his espousals. P.—The sequence

of the thoughts and figures corresponds with the history of the future. When Babylon has fallen and the hero on a white horse with the name written on His garment and on His thigh : “ King of kings and Lord of lords,” shall have slain the hostile peoples with the sword of His mouth, then follows the marriage of the Lamb, which paves a way for itself by means of these penal victories (Rev. 19 : 7). It is this final marriage, which the Psalm as a song of the Church sees beforehand in the dawning light of the Old Testament, and which it hails with shouts of exultation. D.

Myrrh and aloes (and) cassia (are) all thy garments, from palaces of ivory, from (thence) have they gladdened thee. The figure of unction in the close of the preceding verse suggests the idea of perfumes and aromatic substances. His dress is described as so impregnated with these odors that it may be poetically said to be composed of them. By another natural association, these perfumed garments, which were not usually worn, suggest the idea of some rare festivity, and especially of that which is most joyous in all countries. A.

9. The queen. The Hebrew word is not that which is generally used to designate the queens of Israelitish princes. It is a poetical word, and denotes a peculiarity in the choice and position of the bride. Mystically it must refer to the Church, but in her perfect purity and unity, as she is described in the Book of Revelation (19 : 7, 8 ; 21 : 2). *Cook.*

10. *Hear, daughter, and see, and bend thine ear, and forget thy people and the house of thy father.* The Psalmist, in view of the ideal scene which he has brought before us, utters a kind of nuptial exhortation to the queen or chief bride of Messiah. *Hear* what I have to say ; *see*, with the mind’s eye, what I set before thee, look at it, consider it. *Incline thine ear*, lean forward as a sign of attention, so that nothing shall escape thee. This preliminary summons to attend implies that something of serious moment is to follow. A.—The earnestness of this threefold address is peculiarly suitable to the occasion ; how difficult to gain the attention of the bride, how needful to make her fully conscious of the complete change of sphere, involving the disruption of old ties, and the entire surrender of heart to new duties. Equally true and forcible is the application to the Church ; she has one work, to give herself up to Christ ; one sacrifice to make—that of all associations and bonds alien to Him. *Cook.*

10, 11. Forget thy people and thy father’s house. So the bride of Christ

should expel from her heart all her old and earthly loves, to give a pure and a whole heart to her affianced Lord, entering upon this new relation with a radically changed heart and life, old things passing away, and all things, all affections, all the heart's love, and all the soul's real life, made new. So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty ; so thou mayest become sure of His love. Such beauty of soul is forever precious in His eyes. He is thy Lord, thy husband—to be accepted with the sincerest love and obedience of thy heart. C.

Thy forty-fifth Psalm is the coronation oath of Christ to His Church. And here are three thoughts strung together to do honor to the occasion—Christ's delight in His Church's beauty, Christ's claim to His Church's service, and Christ the centre of His Church's worship. *J. Vaughan*.—Our beauty does not consist in our own virtues, nor even in the gifts which we have received from God, by which we put forth virtues, and do all those things which pertain unto the life of the law ; but in this—our apprehending Christ and believing in Him. Then it is that we are truly beautiful ; and it is this beauty alone that Christ looks upon, and upon no other. *Luther*.

12. In the time of Solomon, the Tyrians were the most commercial nation in the world, and the one with which the Israelites had most commercial intercourse. It was natural therefore to use Tyre as a type for the wealth and commerce of the world, as employed by later writers. Thus understood, the promise that the daughter of Tyre should seek, by means of gifts, to conciliate the favor of the queen, is a prediction that the richest of the nations should seek union and communion with the chosen people. A.—“The daughter of Tyre,” the richest of the nations, with gifts shall conciliate thy favor. Here, as in Isa. 60 : 5-17 and 49 : 18-23 and Psalm 72 : 10, the sentiment is that in the fulness of the Messianic times the wealth of the nations shall be cheerfully laid at His feet. C.—The power of missions abroad lies at home : a holy church will be a powerful church. Nor shall there be lack of treasure in her coffers when grace is in her heart ; the free gifts of a willing people shall enable the workers for God to carry on their sacred enterprises without stint. Commerce shall send in its revenue to endow, not with forced levies and imperial taxes, but with willing gifts the Church of the Great King. S.

13. A description of the magnificent appearance presented by the queen, as she stands, or perhaps sits, beside the king on the throne, ar-

rayed in her royal and bridal apparel *in the inner apartments of the palace*—the presence-chamber where the throne was placed. Her arrival there is anticipated in this verse, as the bridal procession is subsequently described ; unless, as Maurer suggests, this was not the king's palace, but some other, where the bride was first lodged, and whence she was conducted to the king.

14, 15. The bridal procession described. The bride walks, in Oriental fashion, on the richly woven carpets spread for her feet, accompanied by her maidens, and a festive band with music, dancing, etc. P.

14. *With (or on) variegated cloths shall she be conducted to the king ; virgins behind her, her companions, brought unto thee.* The lively picture of an Oriental wedding is now completed by a view of the procession to the bridegroom's house. The customary train of female friends is not forgotten, but with this peculiar feature added, that the bridesmaids are themselves described as brides *being brought* (or *made to come*) *to the king*, precisely as the queen was. This departure from the usages of real life is peculiarly appropriate, as it enables the writer to include in his description a striking figurative representation of the eventual accession of the Gentiles to the spiritual privileges and prerogatives which for ages were confined to Israel. A.—She comes with a train of maidens, attached to her in heart and ready to serve her, who along with her also become the possession of her husband. This also fits in with the allegorical interpretation of the Psalm as a hymn of the Church. The Lamb's bride, whom the seer in the Apocalypse beholds clothed in resplendent white linen, which denotes her righteousness, as the variegated golden garments here denote her glory, is neither one person nor one Church, but the Church of Israel along with the Church of the Gentiles, which have had a glorious and active share in the bringing in again of the daughter of Zion. D.

16. After having thus dwelt on the personal graces of the royal pair, the magnificence of their attire, and the splendor of their retinue, the poet again addresses the king, and concludes with congratulations and hopes expressed as to the issue of the marriage. The monarch cannot trace his descent from a long line of kings, but his children shall be better to him than royal ancestry. The sacred poet sees the earthly king and the human marriage before his eyes ; but, while he strikes his harp to celebrate these, a vision of a higher glory streams in upon him. Thus the earthly and the heav-

only mingle. The Divine penetrates, hallows, goes beyond the human; but the human is there. P.

Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children. Instead of the Old Testament Church, the fathers that are going off, there shall be a New Testament Church, a Gentile Church, that shall be grafted into the same olive and partake of its *root and fatness* (Rom. 11 : 17); more and more eminent shall be *the children of the desolate*, than *the children of the married wife* (Isa. 54 : 1). This promise to Christ is of the same import with that (Isa. 53 : 10), *He shall see his seed*; and these shall be made *princes in all the earth*, there shall be some of all nations brought into subjection to Christ, and so made princes, *made to our God kings and priests* (Rev. 1 : 6). H.

17. I will make Thy name to be remembered. The final address of the Psalmist is to the King. The work of all Christ's messengers, whether prophets or evangelists, is simply to make His name known. **Forever and ever.** The last words leave no doubt as to the Messianic character of the Psalm. The people, literally, the peoples, *i.e.*, the Gentiles, accepting Christ as their King, praise Him "as God over all, blessed forevermore" (Rom. 9 : 5). *Cook.*

Israel, which the Psalmist represents, is called

upon first of all to proclaim in praises the name of the Messiah from generation to generation. But in doing so it does not remain alone. The peoples are thereby stirred up to do the same. The end of the history of redemption is this, that Israel and the peoples together praise this lovely, heroic, Divine King. D.—Christ's espousing unto Himself a church, and gathering more and more from age to age by His Word and Spirit unto it, His converting souls and bringing them into the fellowship of His family, and giving unto them princely minds and affections wherever they live, is a large matter of growing and everlasting glory unto His majesty. *Dickson.*

"Thy name remembered in all generations;" the name of Jesus known in all the earth, held in honor and love by all the nations; one Lord and His name one; the idols utterly perished; Jesus, the pure, the lovely and glorious One, the sole object of worship and praise thenceforth and onward forever—such is the consummation of this wonderful prophecy! Will there not be joy above and joy below, joy among the holy in heaven and joy among the living of earth, when this "consummation so devoutly to be wished" shall become too real to be any longer doubted—shall be truly the glory of earth as well as the glory of heaven! C.

PSALM XLVI.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN; A PSALM OF THE SONS OF KORAH; SET TO ALAMOTH. A SONG.

1 God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
2 Therefore will we not fear, though the earth
do change,
And though the mountains be moved in the
heart of the seas;
3 Though the waters thereof roar and be
troubled,
Though the mountains shake with the swell-
ing thereof [Selah
4 There is a river, the streams whereof make
glad the city of God,
The holy place of the tabernacles of the
Most High.
5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be
moved:
God shall help her, and that right early.

6 The nations raged, the kingdoms were
moved:
He uttered his voice, the earth melted.
7 The LORD of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our refuge. [Selah
8 Come, behold the works of the LORD,
What desolations he hath made in the earth.
9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of
the earth;
He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear
in sunder;
He burneth the chariots in the fire.
10 Be still, and know that I am God:
I will be exalted among the nations, I will
be exalted in the earth.
11 The LORD of hosts is with us:
The God of Jacob is our refuge [Selah

THIS and the two following Psalms are hymns of triumph, composed on the occasion of some great deliverance. I am inclined to think that they all celebrated the same event, the sudden and miraculous destruction of the army of Sennacherib under the walls of Jerusalem. That proud host had swept the land. City after city had fallen into the power of the conqueror. The career of Sennacherib and his captains had been one uninterrupted success. The capital itself alone held out, and even there the enfeebled garrison seemed little likely to make a successful resistance. The swollen river had, in the language of the prophet, overflowed all its channels, and risen even to the neck. It was at this crisis that deliverance came. When there were no succors to be expected, when neither king nor army could help the city, God helped her. He, the Lord of hosts, was in the midst of her, keeping watch over her walls and defending her towers. His angel went forth at dead of night and smote the host of the Assyrians, and when men awoke in the morning, there reigned in that vast camp the silence and the stillness of death. Such a deliverance must have filled the whole nation with wonder and joy. The old days of Moses and David would seem to have returned. The hopes of prophets, so great and so glowing, yet so often apparently defeated, seemed now nearer to their accomplishment. The times were at hand when Jerusalem should be indeed the joy of the whole earth, when all nations should acknowledge Jehovah as their king. Her towers, her palaces, the temple of her God, stood in all their beauty, saved by a miracle from the spoiler's hand. God had made Himself known there as a sure refuge, and henceforth His name would be acknowledged in the earth. We should expect to find such a deliverance celebrated by songs of thanksgiving and triumph. We should expect to find in these songs some indications of the particular events which they were intended to commemorate. Accordingly we do find, especially in this Psalm, and in the forty-eighth, certain expressions which are most natural and most intelligible, on the supposition that they were written at this time. In this Psalm there occur, moreover, very remarkable coincidences, both in thought and expression, with those prophecies of Isaiah which were uttered in prospect of the Assyrian invasion. P.

The Church is safe under Divine protection. This theme is amplified in three strophes, the close of which is indicated by the *Selahs*. If the Psalm owed its origin to any particular his-

torical occasion, of which there seem to be some traces in the last part, there is none to which it would be more appropriate than the miraculous destruction of the Assyrian host in the reign of Hezekiah (2 Kings 19 : 35 ; Isa. 37 : 36), as this was a signal instance of Divine interposition for the deliverance of the chosen people, and peculiarly adapted to exalt the God of Israel among the nations. A.

All the points in this Psalm accord admirably with the times of Hezekiah, when God interposed for His people as their refuge and strength in times of deepest trouble, and when the proud Assyrian whose tramp shook the nations was suddenly smitten, and the daughters of Zion rejoiced in the God of their salvation. Nothing forbids that date and occasion ; every point is finely adapted to the circumstances of that time ; and we get a more vivid and life-like sense of the Psalm if we connect it with those historic events. We may think of it as the national song of victory, or rather of *triumph in God*, celebrating not so much the prowess of arms, the courage of heroes, the terrible execution of the enginery of war, as the might of Israel's God. C.

The first strophe (vs. 1-3) brings out the general truth of the safety of those in whose behalf Divine power is enlisted, even in the midst of the wildest commotions, when the earth is shaken to its centre, and all things seem falling into ruin. The second strophe (vs. 4-7) exhibits more particularly the safety of Zion, the place chosen by God for His abode among men, from which all gracious influences descend in living streams, and which He will maintain in beauty and strength, while under His judgments opposing kingdoms shall tumble into ruin, and in the heat of His wrath the solid earth shall be dissolved. In the third strophe (vs. 8-11) the completed result of the recent Divine interposition is celebrated in joyful song. The uproar has ceased. The enemy before the pride of whose power the chosen people had so lately trembled in deadly fear is put to silence, the instruments of war are destroyed, and peace is restored to the wearied and exhausted earth. It would seem as if the poet had idealized recent historic events, as connected with the great Divine forces that are ever working in defence of truth and right against the evil and wrong that have so long been defiant and dominant in the world. This wonderful deliverance is before his mind as suggestive of the final deliverance of the Church from oppression and suffering, of a time under the reign of the Messiah when evil shall be for-

ever vanquished, righteousness covering the earth like a river, and peace like the waves of the sea. In this aspect this song of praise is of permanent value. It will be recognized as the inspired basis of Luther's magnificent choral, "*Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott.*" *De Witt.*

We sing this Psalm to the praise of God because God is with us, and powerfully and miraculously preserves and defends His Church and His Word against all fanatical spirits, against the gates of hell, against the implacable hatred of the devil, and against all the assaults of the world, the flesh and sin. *Luther.*

1-3. First strophe. The safety and security of the people of God, even when the earth itself and the strong foundations of the earth are shaken. The revolutions and commotions of the political world are here described by images borrowed from the convulsions of the natural world, the earthquake which makes the mountains to tremble, the roaring of the seas, etc. See v. 6, where the figure is dropped. P.—The first words strike the key-note of this thrilling song—God, the refuge and the strength of His prayerful, trusting people. It was in times of deepest trouble that He was found their help, exceedingly—this being the precise expression in the song. C.

He who walks humbly with his God, communes with Him and enjoys Him, as the daily tenor of his life, sees the night of adversity darkening around him without consternation. When skies grow dark, when friends are few, when health fails, when losses and bereavements and old age come on, and misfortunes thicken every hour, he can feel that all is safe—that the real portion has not been touched—that God is still the same. His apprehensions of God's nature and providence, his relation to Christ as his covenant head and ever present advocate, and his certainty that no jot or tittle of promise shall remain unfulfilled, avail to lift his head when the waves run highest. In these shakings of the earth and sea he does not behold the tokens of a departing God. On the contrary, he can sing with the Psalmist, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." J. W. A.

Bruised reeds, smoking flax, broken hearts, dumb sufferers, the slow of speech, timid believers, tempted spirits—weakness in all its varieties—find a refuge in that thought of God, which nothing else reveals so affectingly as the gift of prayer, that He is a very *present* help in every time of trouble. He whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain "has come down and placed Himself in the centre of the little

circle of human ideas and affections," as if for the purpose of making our "religion always the homestead of common feelings." *Phelps.*

2. *Therefore we will not fear in the changing of the earth, and in the moving of mountains in the heart of seas.* The simple idea expressed by these strong figures is, in the midst of the most violent changes and commotions. By the *changing* or *exchanging* of the earth we may understand either its change of place, violent removal, or more probably a change of face and aspect or condition, as the effect of mighty revolutions. *In its changing, i.e.,* when it changes and because it changes. The mountains, as appears from v. 6, are emblems of great kingdoms and powerful states. The sea may be mentioned only as the place to which the mountains are transplanted, or in which they are shaken; but it may also be a specific emblem of the world, continually moved and agitated by the strife of human passions. This description is peculiarly appropriate to the commotions necessarily produced by the extensive conquests of the great empires of the ancient world, perhaps with special reference in this case to Assyria. A.

2, 3. The earth thrown into a state of wild confusion, the mountains hurled into the mighty deep, the sea tossed into a tempest, and the everlasting hills drifting on its foaming billows, are the vivid images by which the Divine judgments on wicked and persecuting nations are described in the language of the prophets. *J. Morison.*—"Selah;" pause and contemplate the scene! Think how safe we were in God our refuge, and how safe we shall be through all the future ages with such a refuge ever at hand in our deepest need! C.

4. A river. This figure is expressly chosen to represent the contrast between the serene and tranquil influence of God's presence among His people, and the convulsions described in the preceding verses. *Cook.*—What is meant is the river of grace, which is compared in 36:9 also with a river of Paradise. When the city of God is threatened and invested by enemies, it will neither hunger nor thirst, tremble nor despair, for the river of grace and of its ordinances and promises flows with its joy-bringing waves through the holy place, where the dwelling-place of the Most High has been erected. D.

One of the boasts of Assyria's king was this: "With the sole of my foot have I dried up all the rivers of the besieged places" (Isa. 37:25); implying, it would seem, that he expected to subdue Jerusalem by cutting off its supply of

water. But the resources of the Almighty withstood him at this point, providing a river whose streams should forever gladden the city of God. Water being one of the necessities of life, a river becomes a fit symbol of rich and unfailing supply. Eden was not complete without one; the heavenly paradise rejoices in its "river of the water of life, clear as crystal." C.

Thus, says our Psalm, not with noise, not with tumult, not with conspicuous and destructive energy, but in silent, secret, underground communication, God's grace, God's love, His peace, His power, His almighty and gentle self flow into men's souls. Quietness and confidence on our sides correspond to the quietness and serenity with which He glides into the heart. Instead of all the noise of the sea you have within the quiet impartations of the voice that is still and small, wherein God dwells. The extremest power is silent. The mightiest force in all the universe is the force which has neither speech nor language. The parent of all physical force, as astronomers seem to be more and more teaching us, is the great central sun which moveth all things, which operates all physical changes, whose beams are all but omnipotent, and yet fall so quietly that they do not disturb the motes that dance in the rays. Thunder and lightning are child's play compared with the energy that goes to make the falling dews and quiet rains. The power of the sunshine is the root power of all force which works in material things. And so we turn, with the symbol in our hands, to the throne of God, and when He says, "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," we are aware of an energy, the signature of whose might is its quietness, which is omnipotent because it is gentle and silent. The seas may roar and be troubled, the tiny thread of the river is mightier than they all. A. M.

5. *God (is) in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God will help her at the turning of the morning.* This last idiomatic phrase seems to mean, at the point when the day turns to come back, after reaching its greatest distance. The idea is that of a critical transition from grief to joy. The terms of this verse become still more significant and striking, if we suppose a specific reference to the night in which Sennacherib's host was smitten, and the sight which was disclosed at break of day. A.

"The history of the world is the judgment of the world." When He wills the plains are covered and mountains disappear, but one rock stands fast—"The mountain of the Lord's

house is exalted above the top of the mountains;" and when everything is rocking and swaying in the tempests, here is fixity and tranquillity. She shall not be moved. Why? Because of her citizens? No! Because of her guards and gates? No! Because of her orthodoxy? No! But because God is in her, and she is safe, and where He dwells no evil can come. "Thou carriest Cæsar and his fortunes." The ship of Christ carries the Lord and His fortune; and, therefore, whatsoever becomes of the other little ships in the wild dash of the tempest, this with the Lord on board arrives at its desired haven—"God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved." A. M.

When Melanchthon began sometimes to fear lest the infant Reformation should be stifled in the birth, Luther was wont to comfort him with these words: "If we perish, Christ must fall too (He is in the midst of us), and if it must be so, be it so; I had rather perish with Christ, that great Ruler of the world, than prosper with Cæsar." *J. Coll ngs.*

6, 7. The song recurs again to the scenes of terror—the formidable powers combined against the holy city—to bring to view once more the effect of God's glorious interposition. Just then the awful voice of God was heard; the earth melted; all hostile forces quailed before Him. This proves that the Lord of Hosts, God of the armies of heaven, Monarch of the heavenly worlds, is on our side—at once the God of heaven and the God of Jacob; He is our refuge! Why should we fear? "Selah!" Think of this wonder-working God, the unfailing strength and succor of His people! C.

The condensed narrative moves to its end by a series of short crashing sentences like the ring of the destructive axe at the roots of trees. We see the whole sequence of events as by lightning flashes, which give brief glimpses and are quenched. The grand graphic words seem to pant with haste, as they record Israel's deliverance. That deliverance comes from *the Conquering Voice*. "The heathen raged" (the same word, we may note, as is found a verse or two back, "Though the waters thereof roar"), "the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted." With what vigor these hurried sentences describe, first, the wild wrath and formidable movements of the foe, and then the One Sovereign Word which quells them all, as well as the instantaneous weakness that dissolves the seeming solid substance when the breath of His lips smites it! And where will you find a grander or loftier thought than this,

that the simple word, the utterance of the pure will of God, conquers all opposition, and tells at once in the sphere of material things? He speaks, and it is done. "He uttered His voice, the earth melted." How grandly, too, these last words give the impression of immediate and utter dissolution of all opposition! All the Titanic brute forces are, at His voice, disintegrated, and lose their organization and solidity. "The hills melted like wax;" "The mountains flowed down at Thy presence." A. M.

7. Jehovah (God of) hosts. The name first occurs in the mouth of Hannah (1 Sam. 1:11), and is applied to God as the Great King whom all created powers, the armies both in heaven and in earth, obey. To this name the Psalmist immediately subjoins another, "the God of Jacob," the covenant God of His people. Thus we are reminded, as Calvin remarks, of the double prop on which our faith rests; the infinite power whereby He can subdue the universe unto Himself, and the fatherly love which He has revealed in His Word. Where these two are joined together, our faith may trample on all enemies. P.

8. All the operations of providence must be considered as the works of the Lord, and His attributes and purposes must be taken notice of in them. Particularly take notice of the *desolations He has made in the earth*, among the enemies of His Church, who thought to have laid the land of Israel desolate. The destruction they designed to bring upon the Church has been turned upon themselves. Cities were burned, countries laid waste, armies of men cut off and laid in heaps upon heaps. Come and see the effects of desolating judgments, and stand in awe of God; say, *How terrible art Thou in Thy works!* (66:3.) Let all that oppose Him see this with terror, and expect the same cup of trembling to be put into their hands; let all that fear Him and trust in Him see it with pleasure, and not be afraid of the most formidable powers armed against the Church. Let them gird themselves, but *they shall be broken to pieces.* H.

In war death reigns without a rival and without control. War is the work, the element, or rather the sport and triumph of death, who glories, not only in the extent of his conquest, but in the richness of his spoil. In the other methods of attack, in the other forms which death assumes, the feeble and the aged, who at the best can live but a short time, are usually the victims; here it is the vigorous and the strong. It is remarked by an ancient historian

that in peace children bury their parents, in war parents bury their children; nor is the difference small. R. Hall.

9. When He pleases to sheathe His sword, He puts an end to the wars of the nations, and crowns them with peace. War and peace depend on His word and will as much as storms and calms at sea do (107:25, 29). *He makes wars to cease unto the end of the earth.*

10. Be still and know. Men will set up themselves, will have their own way and do their own will; but let them know that God will be exalted, He will have His way, will do His own will, will glorify His own name, and *wherein they deal proudly, He will be above them*, and make them know that He is so. Let His own people be still; let them be calm and tremble no more, but know to their comfort that the Lord is God, He is God alone and will be exalted above the heathen; let Him alone to maintain His honor, to fulfil His own counsels, and to support His own interest in the world. Though we be depressed, yet let us not be dejected, for we are sure that God will be exalted, and that may satisfy us; He will work for His great name, and then no matter what becomes of our little names. H.

"Be still, and *know.*" We cannot know this deep and eternal truth unless we are still. But, on the other hand, this knowledge will make us still. If we have it not, or are not seeking to have it, we must be restless and impatient; just so far as it is granted to us it must bring tranquillity. *Maurice.*—We need this deeper and stiller element in our piety. We want not only to work, but to believe that God in Christ works, and with mightier forces than we; works through and by us, or without us, as He will; and that we are at best but inapt and incompetent instruments in His hands. F. D. H.

The two clauses which compose this sentence are so interwoven that each may be the cause and each may be the effect of the other. The way to know God is to be still, and the way to be still is to know God. It is one of these beautiful reciprocities which we often find between a duty and a privilege. The way to do the duty is to accept the privilege, and the way to enjoy the privilege is to do the duty. In the stillness you will learn that God is from all eternity the same; that God elects His own; that the whole scheme of man's salvation revolves within himself; that all God's attributes harmonize in Christ. This is stillness: The Lord is; the Lord liveth; the Lord reigneth. J. V.

11. The Lord of hosts is with us.

This is the pervading idea of the Psalm. He is not coming down among us, like some heathen god, to help us in an emergency : He is with us, not visible to our eyes, but really present, the strength and refuge of our hearts. *Maurice.*—God's presence means God's sympathy, God's knowledge, God's actual help, and these are ours if we will. Instead of staggering at the apparent impossibility that so transcendent and mighty a Being should stoop from His throne, where He lords it over the universe, and enter into the narrow room of our hearts, let us rather try to rise to the rapture of the astonished Psalmist when, looking upon the deliverance that had been wrought, this was the leading conviction that was written in flame upon his heart, "*The Lord of hosts is with us !*" A. M.

The joyous refrain of the song brings it fitly to its close. This glorious Lord of hosts dwells among us, the God of His own people ("Jacob") and their everlasting refuge. C.—The Lord of hosts, the God of Jacob, has been, is, and will be with us ; has been, is, and will be our refuge ; the original includes all ; and well may *Selah* be added to it. Mark this and take the comfort of it, and say, *If God be for us, who can be against us?* H.

"The Lord of hosts is with us." That majestic name includes all the deepest and most blessed thoughts of God which the earlier revelation imparted. That name of "Jehovah" proclaims at once His Eternal Being and His covenant relation—manifesting Him by its mysterious meaning as He who dwells above time ; the tideless sea of absolute, unchanging existence, from whom all the stream of creatural life flows forth many colored and transient, to whom it all returns ; who, Himself unchanging, changeth all things ; and declaring Him, by the historical associations connected with it, as having unveiled His purposes in firm words to which men may trust, and as having entered into that solemn league with Israel which underlay their whole national life. He is *the Lord* the Eternal—the covenant name. He is the Lord of hosts, the "imperator," absolute master and commander, captain and king of all the

combined forces of the universe, whether they be personal or impersonal, spiritual or material, who, in serried ranks, wait on Him, and move harmonious, obedient to His will. And this Eternal Master of the legions of the universe is with us, weak and poor, and troubled and sinful as we are.

But we have a fuller revelation of that mighty name, and a more wondrous and closer Divine presence by our sides. The Psalm rejoices in that "the Lord of hosts is with us ;" and the choral answer of the Gospel swells into loftier music, as it tells of the fulfilment of Psalmists' hopes and prophets' visions in Him who is called "Immanuel," which is, being interpreted, "God with us." The Psalm is confident in that God dwelt in Zion. And our confidence has the more wondrous fact to lay hold of, that even now the Word who dwelt among us makes His abode in every believing heart, and gathers them all together at last in that great city, round whose flashing foundations no tumult of ocean beats, whose gates of pearl need not be closed against any foes, with whose happy citizens "God will dwell, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." A. M.

Well, let the world have its course, I am content to bear it ; God's will be done ; let the sea be troubled ; let the waves thereof roar ; let the winds of affliction blow ; let the waters of sorrows rush upon me ; let the darkness of grief and heaviness compass me about ; yet will I not be afraid ; these storms will blow over ; these winds will be laid ; these waves will fall ; this tempest cannot last long ; and these clouds shall be dispelled ; whatsoever I suffer here shall shortly have an end. I shall not suffer eternally ; come the worst that can come, death will put an end to all my sorrows and miseries. Lord, grant me patience here and ease hereafter ! I will suffer patiently whatsoever can happen, and shall endeavor to do nothing against my conscience and displeasing unto Thee ; for all is safe and sure with him who is certain and sure of a blessed eternity. *Bishop Taylor.*

PSALM XLVII.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN ; A PSALM OF THE SONS OF KORAH.

- 1 O CLAP your hands, all ye peoples ;
Shout unto God with the voice of triumph.
- 2 For the LORD Most High is terrible ;
He is a great King over all the earth.
- 3 He shall subdue the peoples under us,
And the nations under our feet.
- 4 He shall choose our inheritance for us,
The excellency of Jacob whom he loved.
[Selah]
- 5 God is gone up with a shout,
The LORD with the sound of a trumpet.

- 6 Sing praises to God, sing praises :
Sing praises unto our King, sing praises.
- 7 For God is the King of all the earth :
Sing ye praises with understanding.
- 8 God reigneth over the nations :
God sitteth upon his holy throne.
- 9 The princes of the peoples are gathered together
To be the people of the God of Abraham :
For the shields of the earth belong unto God ;
He is greatly exalted.

All Nations Worship Jehovah as Their King.
The subject of this Psalm is the joyful acknowledgment by all nations of God's absolute sovereignty in the world. It embodies, therefore, the Messianic idea of the fulfilment of the promise to Abraham that he should be the father of nations, and so points forward to the time when this idea and promise should be fully realized in the ascension and exaltation of our blessed Lord. *De Witt.*

A hymn of triumph, in which the singer calls upon all the nations of the earth to praise Jehovah as their King, and joyfully anticipates the time when they shall all become one body with the people of the God of Abraham. In this sense the Psalm may be called Messianic, a prophecy of the final triumph of God's kingdom upon earth. P.—The Psalm has every appearance of having been composed in reference to some particular event ; but as this is not indicated in the Psalm itself, it can only be conjectured. A.

Most obviously this Psalm celebrates some victory in which God had signally subdued Gentile nations before His people Israel. The tone of it throughout is that of exulting triumph and high praises to the God of their salvation. It lacks the data for determining with certainty its historic occasion. C.—*But it is very clear that both the present sovereignty of Jehovah and the final victories of our Lord are here fitly hymned, while His ascension, as the prophecy of them, is sweetly gloried in.* S.

1. O clap your hands. The immediate result of God's judgments was described in the

preceding Psalm. That was terror and awe. Then the strain changes ; the ultimate effects are realized, and in the establishment of peace and justice all nations are called upon to recognize His goodness. The order of the two clauses should be reversed, "All ye peoples, clap your hands." *Cook.*

1-4. The real and final victory gained by Jehovah does not consist in the subjection of the peoples, but in changing their hearts so that they joyfully worship Him. In order to become the God of all peoples in this sense, He has first become Israel's God ; and Israel also earnestly desires that this design of its election may be attained. It is from this longing that the summons in v. 1 proceeds. The peoples are to manifest their joy in the God of revelation in acts and words ; for Jehovah is exalted absolutely, and His dominion has Israel as its centre, not its limit, but extends to the whole earth. D.

2. The God with whom we have to do is a God of awful majesty. *The Lord most high is terrible.* He is infinitely above the noblest creatures, higher than the highest ; there are those perfections in Him that are to be revered by all, and particularly that power, holiness, and justice that are to be dreaded by all those that contend with Him. He is a God of sovereign and universal dominion ; He is a King that reigns alone, and with an absolute power ; a King over all the earth ; all the creatures, being made by Him, are subject to Him, and therefore He is a great King, the King of kings. H.

4. "Choose our inheritance" is to do again what He did in covenant with Abraham and in fulfilment through Joshua, *i.e.*, give us Canaan and plant us securely therein. C.—"*He shall choose our inheritance for us,*" means that He who knows what is better for us than ourselves *hath chosen*—that is, hath appointed, and that of His own good will and mercy toward us, *our inheritance*; not only things meet for this life, but even all other things concerning the hope of a better life, a kingdom that cannot be shaken, an everlasting habitation, an inheritance which is immortal and undefiled and fadeth not away, reserved for us in heaven. *Boys.*

The constant interference on the part of God regards everything relative to our condition in this finite state of being. The appointment of our prosperity, adversity, sickness, temptations, infirmities of body or mind, personal or relative, the connections we form, the places we choose for residence—in fact, every circumstance relating to our present condition, however minute or apparently unimportant—these all form parts of the Divine choosing, however hard it may be to reconcile superior determination with the free and unrestrained choice which every individual makes for himself. This superintendence is as extensive as it is minute. He telleth the number of the stars, and he counteth the hairs of our head. In its operation it touches the springs of human determination, without at all infringing on individual liberty; and directs man to the choice, while man chooses for himself. In its vast and boundless efficiency, it comprehends the little circle of our own agency—bounds it, checks it, controls it, and renders it subservient to the purposes of infinite wisdom and benevolence. *R. Hall.*

The Divine choice proves itself by Divine love. "The excellency of Jacob, whom He loved." We are the illustrations of the Father's will, we are the excellency of Jacob whom He loved, and so God is justified daily by the verification of human experience. Take, then, the Divine consolation in the text: "He shall choose our inheritance for us." The soul breathes amid such serene and invigorating airs; this is the staple truth of the Book of God. God is the portion, the inheritance, of His people. Let us live in this great faith, in the great and infinite reservations of God. *E. P. Hood.*—"Selah;" pause and dwell upon the marvelous lovingkindness of the Lord our God. C.

5. *God has gone up with shouting, Jehovah with sound of trumpet.* He is here described as returning to heaven after the conquest of His

enemies and the rescue of His people, as in Psalm 7:7 he does the same, after sitting in judgment on the nations, and asserting the right of His own people. The shouting and sound of the trumpet represent the ascension as a public and triumphant one. The ideal scene is typical of the actual ascension of our Saviour.

A.—What has taken place is a prelude of the final and manifest assumption of the kingdom, the proclamation of which the seer hears there. God has come down, and now that by the destruction of Israel's foes He has obtained recognition for Himself, He has gone up again in manifest royal glory. Accordingly this Psalm has in the course of history acquired a prophetic meaning which far transcends its most immediate occasion, a meaning which the Ascension of Christ has first fully disclosed. D.—God is said to come down when He interposes for the deliverance of His people, or the overthrow of their enemies; and "to go up," returning to His heavenly throne, when that work is accomplished. All these expressions have their special and literal fulfilment in the Son. Compare Psalm 68:18 and Eph. 4:8-10. *Cook.*

With a shout. This mention of the "shout," and the voice of the "trumpet," serves to connect together past and future events in the history of the Church and of the world, and carry our thoughts forward to Christ's coming to judgment. *C. Wordsworth.*—Having been down to do battle for us and having gained this complete victory, leaving nothing more for us to desire and having nothing more for Himself to do, what should come next but His glorious ascending to His throne in the heavens? Let Him ascend therefore with shouts of triumph, amid the pæans of victory! C.

The resurrection of Christ is the absolutely unique fact of Christianity, the majestic demonstration of its infinite certainty. This it is which proves it to be a gospel indeed—good tidings of great joy unto all peoples. Accordingly, the resurrection of Christ stands forth in the apostolic theology as the epitome and very label of Christianity itself. And well it may; for it involves the whole story of the incarnation. He who has risen must have died, and He who has died must have lived, and He who has lived must have been born. Jerusalem's empty tomb proves Bethlehem's holy manger. And so it comes to pass that belief in the resurrection of Christ is the touchstone of the Christian faith, the key to the kingdom of heaven. If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God

raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ gives us a present, living, communing Saviour. For what, after all, was the death without the life? Let us take care lest in our devotion to the mighty doctrine of the cross we make too little of the mighty doctrine of the crown. We need not only the atoning work of Christ's historic death; we need also the sanctifying work of Christ's risen, present life. We want the inspirations of a risen, exalted, vitalizing, loving, communing heavenly Friend. And this the resurrection of the Lord Jesus gives us. If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. Because He lives, we live also. G. D. B.

By the cross forgiveness is assured to us, but by the resurrection Christ's energy on high for our purification is also made certain, and so the one supplements the other, rests upon it, but carries it to its transcendent completeness. If to forgiveness be added the expectation and assurance of a purifying energy, sent by the Son of God to give both life and inspiration to every mental force, to purify the whole spiritual nature within us and bring us into fellowship with angels and fellowship with God, then, indeed, forgiveness is consummated by the resurrection of Christ. By the cross He represents to us the Divine temper of self-sacrifice; by the resurrection He represents to us the Divine power and majesty. That Divine power and majesty must be apprehended that we may understand the self-sacrifice which was in the cross, there revealed in its new glory unto the majesty itself. And it is these two revelations of God, in self-sacrificing love and in the power that breaks the tyranny of death itself, which faces the last enemy of life and says, "Thou art conquered;" it is no other than these two, Divine self-sacrifice and Divine majesty, which give glory to every promise. When I see the infinite love of the cross and the infinite power of the emptied sepulchre, and know that I have in Christ my Brother and my King, I know that a spirit of love which never deceives, which gives more than it offers, is always behind the promise, and I know that a power which the world cannot weary, which death cannot break, which eternity cannot exhaust, is behind and beneath the promise, ready to fulfil it, ready to surpass it. So the cross answers to the sepulchre broken, and the tomb, with its doors swung open by the Divine power, answers back to and illustrates the darkened cross on Calvary. The one ap-

peals to our deepest affection, and so most intimately searches and draws to itself our moral life; but the other appeals to our noblest hope. And there is no power which really aggrandizes human nature, augments its force, exalts its level, expands its reach, except the power which at once touches the heart and inspires hope. R. S. S.

Christ rises not alone. A resurrection life fills His Church, touching the lives of His people in the most secret places and to the finest issues. They are raised up with Him, and made to sit in the heavenlies with Him. No base earthward desires need prevail over their spiritual life, which is quickened through Him because of "the power of His resurrection." By many phrases and forms of thought the apostles labor to emphasize the unbounded significance of the resurrection and its far-reaching effect on human life—on human lives. It is not to them an isolated fact of history; it is a very truth of spiritual experience. He is the firstfruits of them that slept, and all are to be made alive through Him unto God. Being risen with Him, we are therefore to set our affections on things above, because our life is hid with Him in God. S. S. T.

7. *For King of all the earth (is) God. Perform a maschil, i.e., sing and play a didactic Psalm.* The *maschil* here meant is the Psalm itself. The designation may have been omitted in the title for the very reason that it is contained in the body of the composition. The doctrine taught is that of Jehovah's universal sovereignty, and of the ultimate subjection of all nations to His peaceful sway. This idea is realized in the reign of the Messiah, so that the Psalm is, in a wide sense, Messianic. A.

Sing ye praises with understanding. Let *sense* and *sound* go together. Let your *hearts* and *heads* go with your *voices*. *Understand* what you *sing*, and *feel* what you *understand*. A. Clarke.—To make melody in our hearts to God in singing of Psalms, we must sing "*with understanding*." We must mind the matter more than the music, and consider what we sing as well as how we sing; the tune may affect the fancy, but it is the matter affects the heart, and that God principally eyes. The Psalmist adviseth us in this particular, and so doth the apostle (1 Cor. 14:15). Otherwise this sweet duty would be more the work of a chorister than of a Christian, and we should be more delighted in an anthem of the musician's making than in a Psalm of the Spirit's making. John Wells.

Worship is an act of the understanding, ap-

plying itself to the knowledge of the excellency of God and actual thoughts of His majesty ; recognizing Him as the supreme Lord and Governor of the world, which is natural knowledge ; beholding the glory of His attributes in the Redeemer, which is evangelical knowledge. This is the sole act of the spirit of man. The same reason is for all our worship as for our thanksgiving. This must be done with understanding : “ Sing ye praise with understanding ;” with a knowledge and sense of His greatness, goodness, and wisdom. It is also an act of the will, whereby the soul adores and reverences His majesty, embraceth His goodness, enters itself into an intimate communion with and pitcheth all his affections upon Him ; we must worship God understandingly ; it is not else a reasonable service. . . . We may be truly said to worship God, though we want perfection ; but we cannot be said to worship Him if we want sincerity ; a statue upon a tomb, with eyes and hands lifted up, offers as good and true a service ; it wants only a voice, the gestures and postures are the same ; nay, the service is better ; it is not a mockery ; it represents all that it can be framed to ; but to worship without our spirits is a ‘presenting God with a picture, an echo, voice, and nothing else ; a compliment ; a mere lie ; a “ compassing Him about with lies.” *Charnock*.

The great function of hymns in public worship is to bring before our hearts as well as our memories, in an attractive and moving form, the great facts of our holy faith, and also to help us to apply these great facts and doctrines to our own particular wants. Hymns teach a lesson as to the unity of believers. They belong, not to one century or another, not to one Church, or one sect, or one class, or one part alone of the kingdom ; but from every section of our fellow-Christians have been found gifted servants of God pouring forth their adoration, their penitence, or their trust in language which is not of a party, but simply Christian. *H. M. Butler*.

8, 9. God has begun to reign over the heathen ; has seated Himself upon His high throne

as King of nations—of which we have the evidence in the wonderful victory we this day celebrate. Already the poet-prophet sees the glorious consummation of God’s future Gospel triumphs, saying : “ for the princes of the people”—the noble-hearted, those high in power over the heathen nations—gather themselves together *as* the people of the God of Abraham, *i.e.*, as being such ; or without the word “ as,” we may translate, *being* the people of the God of Abraham. C.—The poet reads in what has just happened the great final historical fact of the conversion of all peoples to Jehovah. The nobles of the peoples, the “ shields” (*i.e.*, the patrons, protectors) “ of the earth,” enter into alliance with the people of the God of Abraham ; the promise of the blessing of the nations in the seed of the patriarch is fulfilled, for the nobles draw after them the peoples protected by them. D.

9. The shields of the earth belong unto God. Here we have the *rulers* of the earth set forth by a double relation ; and both these noting two things, their *dignity* and their *duty*. They belong to God, it is their honor that He hath sealed them ; they belong to God, it is their duty to be subject to Him. They are “ *shields of the earth*,” it is their honor that they are above others ; they are “ *the shields of the earth*,” it is their duty to protect others. *Bishop E. Reynolds*. — Magistrates are said to *bear the sword*, not to be swords ; and they are said *to be shields*, not to bear shields ; and all this to show that protection and preservation are more essential and intrinsic to their office than destruction and punishment are. *Caryl*.

The insignia of pomp, the emblems of rank, the weapons of war, all must pay loyal homage to the King of all. Those who are earth’s protectors, the shields of the commonwealth, derive their might from Him, and are His. All principalities and powers must be subject unto Jehovah and His Christ, for “ *He is greatly exalted*.” In nature, in power, in character, in glory, there is none to compare with Him. Oh glorious vision of a coming era ! S.

PSALM XLVIII.

A SONG ; A PSALM OF THE SONS OF KORAH.

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| <p>1 GREAT is the LORD, and highly to be praised,
In the city of our God, in his holy mountain.</p> <p>2 Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole
earth,
Is mount Zion, <i>on</i> the sides of the north,
The city of the great King.</p> <p>3 God hath made himself known in her palaces
for a refuge.</p> <p>4 For, lo, the kings assembled themselves,
They passed by together.</p> <p>5 They saw it, then were they amazed ;
They were dismayed, they hasted away</p> <p>6 Trembling took hold of them there ;
Pain, as of a woman in travail.</p> <p>7 With the east wind
Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish.</p> <p>8 As we have heard, so have we seen
In the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city
of our God :</p> | <p>God will establish it for ever. [Selah]</p> <p>9 We have thought on thy lovingkindness,
O God,
In the midst of thy temple.</p> <p>10 As is thy name, O God,
So is thy praise unto the ends of the earth :
Thy right hand is full of righteousness.</p> <p>11 Let mount Zion be glad,
Let the daughters of Judah rejoice,
Because of thy judgments.</p> <p>12 Walk about Zion, and go round about
her :
Tell the towers thereof.</p> <p>13 Mark ye well her bulwarks,
Consider her palaces ;
That ye may tell it to the generation follow-
ing.</p> <p>14 For this God is our God for ever and ever :
He will be our guide <i>even</i> unto death.</p> |
|---|--|

THIS Psalm, there is every reason to suppose, was composed on the same occasion as the two preceding. It celebrates God's protecting care of Jerusalem, and especially the deliverance of the city from the army of Sennacherib (2 Kings 18 : 19 ; Isa. 36), as may be inferred from the many verbal coincidences which present themselves, on a comparison of the Psalm with the prophecies of Isaiah relating to the Assyrian invasion (chaps. 8, 28, 29, 33). P.—This Psalm refers to the same circumstances as the two preceding. It completes the train of grateful thoughts suggested by the deliverance. In the first the overthrow of the enemy is the prominent thought, and in the second the triumph of God's glory ; in this the Psalmist turns his thoughts to the beauty, security, and splendor of the city of God. *Cook.*

The Psalm gives these points—a formidable muster before Jerusalem of hostile people under confederate kings, with the purpose of laying siege to the city ; some mysterious check which arrests them before a sword is drawn, as if some panic fear had shot from its towers and shaken their hearts ; and a flight in wild confusion from the impregnable dwelling-place of the Lord of hosts. The occasion of the terror

is vaguely hinted at, as if some solemn mystery brooded over it. All that is clear about it is that it was purely the work of the Divine hand. Now there is one event in Jewish history which corresponds, point for point, to these details—the crushing destruction of the Assyrian army under Sennacherib. There was the same mustering of various nations, compelled by the conqueror to march in his train, and headed by their tributary kings. There was the same arrest before an arrow had been shot or a mound raised against the city. There was the same purely Divine agency coming in to destroy the invading army. Whatever may be thought, however, of that allocation of it to a place in the history, the great truths that it contains depend upon no such identification. They are truths for all time ; gladness and consolation for all generations. There is the glory of Zion, the deliverance of Zion, and the consequent grateful praise and glad trust of Zion. A. M.

It consists of three parts : 1. An introduction which, after an ascription of praise to God, describes the glory (v. 2) and the security (v. 3) of Zion, as the city in which God hath made Himself known (vs. 1-3). 2. The defeat of the enemy. Because God thus dwells in Zion and

loves Zion, she has been saved out of the hand of the Assyrian. That mighty host led by its kingly captains did but look upon the city, and were confounded as in a moment, broken as with the east wind which breaks the ships of Tarshish, melting away "like snow in the glance of the Lord" (vs. 4-8). 3. Thanksgiving to God, whose praise is not only in Zion but in all the earth, and whose great deliverance the poet would have remembered in all time to come (vs. 9-14).

1-3. It is because Zion is the city of God that she so far surpasses all other cities in beauty and renown. It is the glory of His presence which makes her glorious; the strength of His presence which makes her safe.

2. Beautiful in elevation, or "rising aloft in beauty." This is precisely one of the most striking features in the topography of Jerusalem. "Its elevation," says Stanley, "is remarkable; occasioned not from its being on the summit of one of the numerous hills of Judæa, like most of the towns and villages, but because it is on the edge of one of the highest tablelands in the country. Hebron, indeed, is higher still, by some hundred feet; and from the south, accordingly, the approach to Jerusalem is by a slight descent. But from every other side the ascent is perpetual; and to the traveller approaching Jerusalem from the west or east it must have always presented the appearance, beyond any other capital of the then known world—we may add, beyond any important city that has ever existed on the earth—of a mountain city; breathing, as compared with the sultry plains of the Jordan or of the coast, a mountain air, enthroned on a mountain fastness." P.

At the northernmost bounds—that is, of the city, or of the elevated plateau on which it was built. There can be no longer a doubt that the ancient hill of Zion is near the northern extremity of the more westerly of the two ridges into which the city was anciently divided. The temple hill was opposite on the eastern ridge. The crest of Zion was much the higher. On account of its elevation it was the characteristic feature of the Holy City, but by immense labor it was removed by the Maccabees, so that no hill higher than the Temple and the Upper City might be occupied by an enemy, as this had been by the Macedonians. On the eastern, western, and southern sides Jerusalem was bounded by impassable ravines, the valley of Hinnom on the west, and the valley of Kedron on the east, with their steep declivities, forming a junction at the south, rendering the city

almost impregnable except on the northern side, where strong fortifications were needed. Inside the wall, having the deep gorge on its easterly side, the massive citadel of Zion towered above everything around it. *De Witt.*

Surrounded by mountains, and standing itself on considerable heights, Jerusalem seemed the very spot on which to place the chief city of the country. If it was "beautiful for situation," it was so in a military or utilitarian, rather than an æsthetic or picturesque sense. It was the very symbol of a God-encircled, God-protected city. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even forever." To an invading army it was difficult of access; and even when an army was under the walls, its strength and security may be judged from the saying ascribed to the Roman general Titus, that if it had not been for the dissensions among the people themselves, the place could never have been taken. W. G. B.—When I stood that morning on the brow of Olivet, and looked down on the city crowning those battle-mented heights, encircled by those deep and dark ravines, I involuntarily exclaimed, "*Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.*" And as I gazed, the red rays of the rising sun shed a halo round the top of the castle of David; then they tipped with gold each tapering minaret, and gilded each dome of mosque and church, and at length, bathed in one flood of ruddy light the terraced roofs of the city, and the grass and foliage, the cupolas, pavements, and colossal walls of the Haram. No human being could be disappointed who first saw Jerusalem from Olivet. *J. L. Porter.*

3. Did Mount Zion ever look more fair to those enraptured eyes? Only a few hours ago in danger of war, siege, capture, conflagration, utter destruction; now standing *saved*, untouched, in more than its former glory;—we need not wonder then that her joyful sons and daughters should sing: "Beautiful for elevation, the joy of all the land, is this our Mount Zion," especially as seen from the north; the city honored as the home and throne of the Great King! In her palaces we have known and proved our God to be our refuge. In our danger we sought Him—not in vain! C.

4. There follows, in a few lines, a striking picture of the advance of the hostile army, and of its sudden destruction. Compare with this the wonderfully graphic description of the same march in Isa. 10: 28-34. **The kings.**

The mention of "kings" in the plural does not prove that the Psalm cannot be referred to the Assyrian invasion. They were perhaps satraps, or petty kings (cf. Judges 5 : 3, 19), dependent upon Sennacherib. In his annals, as lately deciphered, he speaks of setting up tributary kings or viceroys in Chaldea, Phœnicia, and Philistia, after conquering those countries. Calvin and others, who refer the Psalm to the time of Ahaz, suppose Pekah and Rezin to be meant. Hengstenberg and Delitzsch think that "the kings" are those of Moab, Ammon, and Edom, who united to attack Jehoshaphat, and that it is their discomfiture which is the subject of the Psalm. But the battle at Tekoa would surely not have been described as the deliverance of Jerusalem.

5. The force of the description in this verse, as in the last, is much increased by the way in which the verbs follow one another without a copula. Calvin well illustrates it by Cæsar's *veni, vidi, vici*. A succession of scenes is thus flashed upon the eye. Each word is a picture. First, we have the mustering of the hosts; then their march; then their first sight of the city; then their astonishment, their dismay, their wild panic and flight.

6, 7. This confusion and terror are now further portrayed under two images: the first, that of a travailing woman, a common one in the Old Testament, and found also in the New; and the second, in which the defeat of Sennacherib's army is compared to the wreck and dispersion of a navy in a storm. The image in this case is presented with lyric vividness, as if the sacred poet were himself looking on the scene. P.—The Psalmist is not thinking of any actual scattering of hostile fleets—from which Jerusalem was never in danger; but is using the shipwreck of "the ship of Tarshish" as a picture of the utter, swift, God-inflicted destruction which ground that invading army to pieces. A. M.

8. This marvellous deliverance is but a fresh proof, in our own experience, of that wonder-working love which in the days of old has so often manifested itself in Israel. The things which our fathers have told us, we have now witnessed with our own eyes. And therefore, also, the present is regarded as a pledge for the future: "God will establish it—make it stand firm—forever," as 87 : 5. P.—*God will confirm it, or establish her, i.e., Jerusalem, the city of our God.* He will secure it against all such assaults as it has just escaped. As Jerusalem is here regarded not as a mere town, but as the seat of the theocracy, the earthly residence of

God, the promise is still valid, in its strongest sense, with respect to the Church, of which the ancient Zion was the constituted type and local centre. A.

As we have heard in the promise and prediction, so have we seen in the performance and accomplishment. We have heard that God is the Lord of hosts, and that Jerusalem is the city of our God, is dear to Him, is His particular care; and now we have seen it, we have seen the power of our God, we have seen His goodness, we have seen His care and concern for us; that He is a *wall of fire round about Jerusalem, and the glory in the midst of her*. In the great things that God has done, and is doing, for His Church, it is good to take notice of the fulfilling of the Scriptures. God Himself has undertaken the establishment of it; it is the Lord that has founded Zion (Isa. 14 : 32). And what we have seen, compared with what we have heard, may encourage us to hope in that promise of God, upon which the Church is built. H.

The deliverance thus described links the present with the past. So God's merciful manifestation to us has this blessed effect, that it changes hearsay and tradition into living experience;—this blessed effect, that it teaches us, or ought to teach us, the inexhaustibleness of the Divine power, the constant repetition in every age of the same works of love. Taught by it, we learn that all these old narratives of His grace and help are ever new, not past and gone, but ready to be reproduced in their essential characteristics in our lives too. We, too, if we mark the daily dealings of that loving Hand with us, have every occasion to say, Thy lovingkindness of old lives still. Still, as of old, the hosts of the Lord encamp round about them that fear Him to deliver them. Still, as of old, the voice of guidance comes from between the cherubim. Still, as of old, the pillar of cloud and fire moves before us. Still, as of old, angels walk with men. Still, as of old, His hand is stretched forth to bless, to feed, to guard. Nothing in the past of God's dealings with men has passed away. A. M.

9-14. The next portion of the Psalm consists of the grateful celebration of that which God had done for Zion. **We have thought,** *i.e., pondered, considered in that deep, still, heartfelt gratitude, whence issue the loud praises of the tongue.* In Thy temple, either as the place in which the congregation met to acknowledge God's lovingkindness, or as the place in which He had *manifested* His lovingkindness. P.—The deliverance, first of all,

deepens the glad meditation on God's favor and defence. "We have thought," say the ransomed people, as with a sigh of rejoicing, "we have thought of Thy lovingkindness in the midst of Thy temple." The scene of the manifestation of His power is the scene of their thankfulness, and the first issue of His mercy is His servants' praise. Then, the deliverance spreads His fame throughout the world. "According to Thy name, O God, so is Thy praise unto the ends of the earth. Thy right hand is full of righteousness." The name of God is God's own making known of His character, and the thought of these words is double. They most beautifully express the profoundest trust in that blessed name that it only needs to be known in order to be loved. There is nothing wanted but His manifestation of Himself for His praise and glory to spread. Why is the Psalmist so sure that according to the revelation of His character will be the revenue of His praise? Because the Psalmist is so sure that that character is purely, perfectly, simply good—nothing else but good and blessing—and that He cannot act but in such a way as to magnify Himself. He is all "light, and in Him is no darkness at all." There needs but the shining forth in order that the light of His character shall bring gladness and joy wheresoever it falls. A. M.

12-14. The study of the external and internal condition of the Church fills the heart with rapture and the lips with praise. In figurative martial terms the Psalmist celebrates the *position, strength, glory, and perpetuity* of the Church. Based upon the eternal Rock, it will stand until a long groaning creation awakes to hear the Easter hymn that is to be sung in the jubilee of the final Sabbath. *E. S. Porter.*

The citizens, who in the temple have been rendering the tribute of their meditation and thankful gratitude to God for His lovingkindness, are now called upon to come forth from the enclosure of the besieged city, and free from all fear of the invading army, to "walk about Zion, and go round about her and tell the towers," and "mark her bulwarks" and palaces. They look first at the defences, on which no trace of assault appears, and then at the palaces guarded by them, that stand shining and unharmed. The deliverance has been so complete that there is not a sign of the peril or the danger left. Not one stone has been smitten from the walls, nor one agate chipped in the windows of the palaces. It is unharmed as well as uncaptured. Thus, we may say, we have a city which cannot be moved; and the removal of

the things which can be shaken but makes more manifest its impregnable security. Whatever is His will stand forever. A. M.

13. *Tell this to the generation following*, as a wonderful instance of God's care of His holy city, that the enemies should not only not ruin or destroy it, but not so much as hurt or deface it. This must certainly be applied to the Gospel Church, that Mount Zion (Heb. 12:22). See it founded on Christ, the Rock fortified by the Divine power, guarded by Him that neither slumbers nor sleeps. See what precious ordinances are its palaces, what precious promises are its bulwarks; tell this to the generation following, that they may with purpose of heart espouse its interests and cleave to it. H.

All the discoveries of God which nature and providence are competent to make fade into comparative insignificance before the transcendent disclosures of redemption. That scheme stands like a temple of majestic proportions, and bears visibly engraved upon its portals not only the name of God, like the ancient temple of Isis, but also the sublimer mystery of His personal distinctions. In walking about Zion, telling her towers and marking well her bulwarks, we perceive the hand of the Father, the hand of the Son, and the hand of the Holy Ghost. There are palaces adorned for the great King which we are exhorted to consider, for there the Trinity reigns, there God displays His mysterious personality, and the whole house is filled with His glory. *Thornwell.*

14. The Father who made, the Son who redeemed, the Holy Ghost who sanctified and who liveth in the temple of our hearts—"this God is our God forever and ever; He shall be our guide unto death." *Farrar.*—The verse as it stands is admirably in harmony with the song, and is its crowning beauty. When the Lord does great things for Church or nation, He means that all the faithful, however humble their station, should take courage from it, should repose in Him fresh confidence, and cling to Him with a firmer hope, and say, "*This God is our God forever; He will guide us even unto death.*" *W. Binnie.*

God, our God, is our guide, an approved guide. The history of His guidance, the map of the tracks by which He has led His people, is before us. We can study it for ourselves, and can convince ourselves that God has made no mistakes; that He has never yet led any soul of man astray. The map of men's courses through life is indeed a confused one; but the confusion is made by men's wandering feet, by men's divergences from God's lines. The first

instance has yet to be shown of one who has fared other than well by following God as a guide. V.—Heaven often seems distant and unknown, but if He who made the road thither is our guide we need not fear to lose the way. We do not want to see far ahead—only far enough to discern Him and trace His footsteps. Christ does not give us the full revelations of God and heaven at once; we could not bear them now. He gives us Himself, and in that gift everything is secure. Our peace lies not in believing much, but in believing well. If our faith in Him is unwavering He will return it with knowledge. The way to escape from doubts is to think about Christ. What we need is not explanation, but confidence. Sometimes we know not what to believe, but always we know *whom* we have believed. Religion is not a theory, nor a doctrine; it is the coming of a person to a person, by a person. They who follow Christ, even through darkness, will surely reach the Father. *H. Van Dyke.*

If God be our God, He is ours forever, not only through all the ages of time, but to eternity; for it is the everlasting blessedness of glorified saints that *God Himself will be with them, and will be their God* (Rev. 21: 3). If He be our God, He will be our guide, our faithful constant guide, to show us our way, and to lead us in it; He will be so even unto death, which will be the period of our way, and will bring us to our rest. He will be our guide *beyond* death. He will conduct us safe to a happiness on the other side death, to a life in which there shall be no more death. If we take the Lord for our God, He will conduct and convey us safe to death, through death, and beyond death, and up to glory. H.—What a portion is that of the believer! Possessions shall soon change masters; possessors shall soon mingle with the dust, and even the graves they shall occupy may not long be theirs; but it is the singular, the supreme happiness of every Christian to have a right to say, “This glorious God with all His Divine perfections is my God, forever and ever, and even death itself shall not separate me from His love.” *G. Burder.*

Our God, our guide unto death.

God's presence is enough for toil and enough for rest. If He journey with us by the way, He will abide with us when nightfall comes; and His companionship will be sufficient for direction on the road, and for solace and safety in the evening camp. We have often to travel by solitary ways. Some of us have perplexed paths to tread. Some of us have sad memories of times when we journeyed in company with

those who will never share our tent or counsel our steps any more, and as we sit lonely by our watchfire in the wilderness, have aching hearts and silent nights. Some of us may be, as yet, rich in companions and helpers, whose words are wisdom, whose wishes are love to us. But for us all, cast down and lonely, or still blessed with dear ones and afraid to live without them, there is a presence which departs never, which will move before us as we journey, and hover over us as a shield when we rest; which will be a cloud to veil the sun that it smite us not by day, and will redden into fire as the night falls, being ever brightest when we need it most, and burning clearest of all in the valley at the end, where its guidance will only cease because then “the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall lead them.” *A. M.*

The aged believer knows that his salvation is nearer than when he believed. As one long in bondage looks out wistfully for deliverance, so he lifts up his head, because his redemption draweth nigh. Harkening for the footsteps of his beloved Master, who is coming to transport him to Himself, he patiently waits till his change come. These are blessed fruits of grace, enjoyed at a period when the world has nothing to offer to its outworn devotees. It is the privilege of aged Christians to expect these comforts, which are the more satisfying, as being altogether independent of all outward circumstances; they may be possessed, nay, they have been ten thousand times possessed, by the poor, the infirm, the diseased, the deaf, the blind; the united voice of hope and exultation, which rises from the tabernacles of aged pilgrims is, “For this God is our God forever and ever, He will be our guide even unto death.” *J. W. A.*

One is constantly surprised by the correspondence between these words of the Psalms and the words of Christ. More and more it seems that the Psalms are full of Christ. And surely we cannot miss the correspondence here, “This God is our God forever and ever; He will be our guide even unto death;” “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” We want the guide *at* the end, but in order to that we want Him all the way *to* the end. That is what He says we shall have. “He will be our guide even unto death.” Beyond death we shall have Him if we have Him up to that point, for the great object of His guidance is to bring us to His own home. Again, the sev-

enty-third Psalm expands the thought, "Thou shalt guide me by Thy counsel and *afterward take me to glory.*" That word "take" is very suggestive. You find it in the forty-ninth Psalm, "God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for *He shall take me.*" It is the same word which is used in the story of

Enoch: "Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him." Just think how significant it is, that, back in that far-off time, long before life and immortality were brought to light, the departure from life is put in this most beautiful and comforting way—being taken by God. V.

PSALM XLIX.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN; A PSALM OF THE SONS OF KORAH.

1 HEAR this, all ye peoples;
Give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world:
2 Both low and high,
Rich and poor together.
3 My mouth shall speak wisdom;
And the meditation of my heart shall be of
understanding.
4 I will incline mine ear to a parable:
I will open my dark saying upon the harp.
5 Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil,
When iniquity at my heels compasseth me
about?
6 They that trust in their wealth,
And boast themselves in the multitude of
their riches;
7 None of them can by any means redeem his
brother,
Nor give to God a ransom for him:
8 (For the redemption of their soul [life] is
costly,
And must be let alone [it faileth] for ever:)
9 That he should still live alway,
That he should not see corruption.
10 For he seeth that wise men die,
The fool and the brutish together [alike]
perish,
And leave their wealth to others.
11 Their inward thought is, *that* their houses
shall continue for ever,
And their dwelling places to all generations;

They call their lands after their own names.
12 But man abideth not in honour:
He is like the beasts that perish.
13 This their way is their folly:
Yet after them men approve their sayings.
[Selah]
14 They are appointed as a flock for Sheol;
Death shall be their shepherd:
And the upright shall have dominion over
them in the morning;
And their beauty shall be for Sheol to con-
sume, that there be no habitation for
it.
15 But God will redeem my soul from the
power of Sheol:
For he shall receive me. [Selah]
16 Be not thou afraid when one is made rich,
When the glory of his house is increased:
17 For when he dieth he shall carry nothing
away;
His glory shall not descend after him.
18 Though while he lived he blessed his soul,
And men praise thee, when thou doest well
to thyself,
19 He shall go to the generation of his fathers;
They shall never see the light.
20 Man that is in honour, and understandeth
not,
Is like the beasts that perish.

The Vanity of Earthly Aggrandizement. Psalm 49 is didactic, and contains no national or historic allusions. It is addressed to all men without distinction. "It discusses the problem of temporal happiness and the prosperity of the ungodly, and is therefore related to 37 and 73"

(Moll). It exhibits the transitoriness of the success and joy of the wicked, and the sure hope of the upright resting upon God. Its character is in harmony with the title which ascribes it to David as the author. *De Witt.*

This Psalm contains the most perfect devel-

opment of Hebrew thought on the deepest problem of existence. It affirms clearly the doctrine of a future state of compensation, and establishes it on the strongest grounds. It is altogether didactic, resembling in style and rhythm the Book of Proverbs, in brief, compact, and highly poetic sentences, adapted for solemn recitation with lyric accompaniment; it brings together a series of striking thoughts on the present and future condition of men "who trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches." Through life they prosper, leave a rich inheritance to their children, look forward to the permanence and grandeur of their posterity, who laud their names and approve their sayings; but with the end of life comes the end of all; they are the prey of death, wise and fools alike; their noble forms rot in the grave, and they have no futurity of life (v. 19). The righteous, on the contrary, is redeemed from death (v. 15), taken unto Himself by God; and in the morning he will have dominion over them. The contrast is complete: in this life the wicked has everything, even the hope of permanent prosperity for his family, but for him there is no hope after death; the righteous in this life may have absolutely none but evil days, may be beset by treacherous foes (v. 5), but he is sure of redemption, of acceptance with God, of a morning ushering in the dominion of light. *Cook.*

This Psalm, like the thirty-seventh, is intended to console the righteous under the trials arising from the prosperity and enmity of wicked men, by showing these to be but temporary, and by the prospect of a speedy change in the relative position of the parties. A.—It is designed as a vindication of the ways of God in sight of the different fortunes of the righteous and the wicked in this world. It is no mere commonplace on the shortness of life and the uncertainty of riches. It is no philosophical dissertation, which bids us bear up bravely in our perils and sufferings, telling us that virtue is its own reward. It goes at once to the root of the matter. It shows us not only the vanity of riches, but the end of those who "boast themselves in their riches." It comforts the righteous in their oppression and affliction, not merely by the assurance that they shall finally triumph over the wicked, but by the more glorious hope of life everlasting with God. Here is the true ground of consolation, that God will not only not forsake those who trust in Him in this life, but that He will take them to Himself. It is this doctrine specially enun-

ated which gives the Psalm its distinctive character, and which leads the Psalmist himself to claim for it so attentive a hearing.

The Psalm consists of three parts. First, an introduction, in which the whole world is called upon to listen to the words of the poet, and in which he further declares that he speaks by Divine inspiration (vs. 1-4). Then follows the main body of the poem, in two principal divisions, marked by the refrain, which closes each (vs. 5-12 and vs. 13-20). The former of these contains, generally, a description of men prosperous and rich, whose riches puff them up with pride, and with the foolish imagination that they can secure for themselves an immortality upon earth; but who are so far from being able to save themselves or others from death by their riches, that they are no better than the beasts that perish (vs. 5-12). The remainder of the Psalm deals chiefly with the consolation to be derived from the end of the righteous, as contrasted with the end of the worldly (vs. 13-20). P.

1-4. It is a theme of common human interest that the poet means to treat of, and therefore he calls upon all the peoples and all the inhabitants of the world. This term denotes primarily temporal life, which slips away unnoticed, then the world itself which passes away in time. He purposes to proclaim to the rich the nullity of their false ground of hope and to the poor the superiority of the true ground, and therefore he desires for himself as pupils both children of common people, who are men and have nothing to distinguish them from others, and children of people of quality—rich and poor, as he adds by way of explanation. For his mouth will or shall utter not a great variety of wise doctrines, but weighty wisdom. D.

1. The word translated *world* means primarily *duration* or continued existence; then more specifically, human *life*, the present state of things; and by a natural transition, the *world*, as the place where it is spent. A.

2. The Psalm opens by calling the attention of all people of every possible rank in life. The Hebrew language has two very unlike words for *man*; one drawn from the *earth*, and significant of frailty; the other significant of his relative strength and nobility. Both are brought together here: man, the low; and man, the high. This distinction is germane to the present theme; an admonition to the rich and the nobly born, suggesting that they forbear to set undue value on wealth and honor, and a comfort to the poor of humble origin, inasmuch

as the more enduring good of God's favor and love are free to their choice and fully within their attainment. C.—Let those that are high and rich in the world hear of the vanity of their worldly possessions, and not be proud of them, nor secure in the enjoyment of them, but lay them out in doing good, that with them they may make to themselves friends; let those that are poor and low hear this, and be content with their little, and not envy those that have abundance. Poor people are as much in danger from an inordinate desire toward the wealth of the world as rich people from an inordinate delight in it. II.

3. "Wisdom" and "understanding" have here the meaning common in the Proverbs of Solomon, practical sound sense in the choice of the highest and best good of life—viz., God's favor and love—far above all the glittering, fallacious treasures of earth. C.

4. *I will incline mine ear*, as one who listens patiently for the Divine revelation. The inspiration of the poet, as well as that of the prophet, is from above. He cannot speak of his own heart; he must hear what God the Lord will say. P.

5. *Why should I fear in days of evil (when), the iniquity of my oppressors (or supplanters) shall surround me?* The theme of the whole Psalm is the negative proposition involved in this interrogation—namely, that the righteous has no cause to fear, even when surrounded by powerful and spiteful enemies. A.—The consolatory result at which he has arrived, after looking at the world, and weighing in the balance those whose fortune seems fair and prosperous, is placed first, before he tells the tale, as in chaps. 37:1; 73:1. It should be remarked, that the rich men of the Psalm are not described as "the wicked," "the ungodly," "the violent," etc., as in other Psalms. Only one hint is given, in the word "iniquity" (v. 5), that they are evil men. But this seems to be designed, as in our Lord's parable of the rich man and Lazarus, to show that the selfish, proud, boastful use of riches, the mere luxuriousness of wealth, apart from violence or unscrupulousness of conduct, is evil, and finds its end in the outer darkness.

6-9. All that is here taught is, that no wealth can save a man from death, because the life of men is not in their own hands, or in that of their fellows, but only in the hand of God, who cannot be bribed. There is a kind of solemn irony in the idea of the richest of men offering all his riches to God to escape death. P.—With all his wealth not a man of them

can redeem his brother from death and the grave! They may have unbounded trust in their riches, they may make any amount of display of their abundant wealth, and may *shine* before the eyes of men (so the Hebrew word for "boast" implies); but God will by no means accept their gold as a ransom from the grave. Such redemption of the soul (life) is *costly*; it costs too much for them to pay in gold. One desists from the effort forever, or he utterly and forever fails to make up an adequate ransom, and therefore all hope of success perishes forever. The former seems to be more precisely the sense of the original; man must give over the effort in eternal despair! The richest of men will not, cannot, live forever so as not to see the corruptions of the grave. C.

6. A man may have abundance of the wealth of this world and be made better by it, may thereby have his heart enlarged in love and thankfulness and obedience, and may do that good with it which will be fruit abounding to his account; and therefore it is not men's having riches that denominates them worldly, but their setting their hearts upon them as the best things; and so these worldly people are here described. 1. They repose a confidence in their riches; *they trust in their wealth*; they depend upon it as their portion and happiness, and expect that it will secure them from all evil, and supply them with all good, and that they need nothing else, no, not God Himself. 2. They take a pride in their riches; *they boast themselves in the multitude of them*, as if they were sure tokens of God's favor, and certain proofs of their own ingenuity and industry. *My might and the power of my hand have gotten me this wealth*; as if they made them truly great and happy, and more really excellent than their neighbors. H.—As a rule, rich men are content with the world as it is—naturally; for, as they think, the world has dealt very kindly by them, and therefore they see no great need for bettering it. And then, if they hoard their money, it speedily becomes a rival with Christ in their affections; while, if they spend it, they multiply the luxuries and enjoyments which relax their moral fibre, and dispose them to an easy toleration of much that is mean and sensual in themselves and in their neighbors. If they seek to rise in the world, to make themselves a great place and name, they must give themselves to the endeavor with a devotion which is always in danger of becoming excessive. In short, wealth has many wiles; it is full of all deceitfulness; and no man is worthy of profounder honor than the rich man who

keeps himself unspotted, whether by world or Church. *Cox.*

However acquired, if wealth is not held and kept as a solemn trust in stewardship for God, it tends to attract the heart and hold it fast to itself. It narrows the range of sympathy; it tempts one to treat his poorer neighbor with scorn and neglect. It leads him to exalt pride above humanity. He is in danger of forgetting whence his affluence came, who gave it, and who continues it, and who can make it worthless in a moment. He is in danger of forgetting God in the idolatry of his wealth; of counting himself, with the resources at his command, independent of the great Giver; of living to enjoy his money rather than employ it for God. There is danger of its becoming his greatest curse—its very touch infecting his soul with a kind of leprosy—his grasp upon it leading him to neglect to seize upon what is infinitely more important. There is danger of his regarding it as his own, exclusive of the claims of God, and employing it as an instrument of luxury and pride, building and furnishing himself a heaven with it here, to the neglect of a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. E. H. G. —The price which the rich man pays for his wealth is the temptation to be selfish. They have paid in spirituals for what they have gained in temporals. Now, if you are crying for a share in that wealth, and a participation in that power, you must be content to run the risk of becoming as hard and selfish and overbearing as the man whom you denounce. Blame their sins if you will, or despise their advantages; but do not think that you can covet their advantages and keep clear of their temptations. God is on the side of the poor, and the persecuted, and the mourners—a light in darkness and a life in death. But the poverty, and the persecution, and the darkness are the condition on which they feel God's presence. They must not expect to have the enjoyment of wealth and the spiritual blessings annexed to poverty at the same time. If you will be rich, you must be content to pay the price of falling into temptation, and a snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in perdition; and if that price be too high to pay, then you must be content with the quiet valleys of existence, where alone it is well with us; kept out of the inheritance, but having instead God for your portion, your all-sufficient and everlasting portion. Peace, and quietness, and rest with Christ. F. W. R.

7-9. The thought of man's redemption of himself is far from the poet's mind; the antith-

esis he has in view is this: one man cannot redeem another; God alone can redeem man. That none of his fellows can redeem a man, is expressed in the strongest possible manner. Luther's rendering is substantially correct: a brother can no one redeem, nor make atonement for any one to God. With a slight tinge of irony v. 8 says that the ransom which would have to be paid for the souls of men is dear or of large amount, *i.e.*, exorbitant, and that he (who would fain pay it down) lets it alone (must let it alone) forever. This is clear grammatically and quite in keeping with the contest. We take v. 8 as a parenthesis; the principal clause (v. 10) declares: no man can give to God a ransom that defends another from death, so that he should live on without seeing the pit, *i.e.*, without having to sink down into the grave. D.

7. Give to God a ransom for him.

Death is but the jailor or the prison; the ransom must be one which God accepts, and God is the only Redeemer.

8. The redemption . . . precious.

So costly that it cannot be achieved (see Job 36: 18, 19); when the fatal blow is once inflicted, "*then a great ransom cannot deliver thee.*"

And it ceaseth, or, "and he gives it up," *i.e.*, abandons the attempt; then each man once lost will remain unredeemed forever; no mediation will avail, or be thought of hereafter. *Cook.*—We cannot bribe death, that our brother should still live, much less that he should live forever in this world, nor bribe the grave, that he should not see corruption; for we must needs die and return to the dust, and there is no discharge from that war. What folly is it to trust to and boast of that which will not enable us so much as for one hour to respite the execution of the sentence of death upon a parent, a child, or a friend that is to us as our own soul! H.

10. Wise men. Not simply meaning that their wisdom cannot save them, but that their utmost wisdom will not lead them to make so profitable a use of their wealth as thereby to escape the grave. **Die . . . perish**, the words seem purposely chosen to denote the end respectively of the *wise* and the *brutish*. P.

10-14. "*For*" assigns a reason for accepting the truth previously stated. Every observer of human life will see that the rich, whether wise or foolish, die and are compelled to leave their hoarded wealth to others. It matters not how wise they may have been, nor, on the other hand, how foolish or even brutish; all alike must in their time go down to the

grave and leave their riches to others. They may have inwardly thought that their houses would stand forever, and they may have tacitly assumed that their own life would be as permanent as their earthly mansions. They may have even given their own names to their estates and magnificent establishments; but this insures no perpetuity to their own frail life. So perish all man's vain hopes of an earthly immortality! A few days or years only, and he is numbered with the dead, and the places that knew him once shall know him no more! C.

11. Their inward thought is. This expresses the sense of the Hebrew, which is singularly forcible; it means that their whole inner man (see v. 9) is filled with one thought: they know they must die, but then their houses will stand for many generations, their lands will bear their name, and preserve their memory. *Cook.*—Though he seeth that all die, the godly and the wicked, still there is the cleaving imagination of an eternity on this side of death. He builds as securely on the world as if the world were to last forever. The worldly generation that succeed him shall admire his wisdom, honor him for the prosperity to which he has risen, praise him for the success of his own selfishness, even as he congratulated his own wisdom and good fortune while he was alive. *Chalmers.*

Amid unbroken felicity and successes, the worldly spirit increases in power. It becomes strong, absorbing of mind and heart, far-reaching, rancorous, and unsatisfied. Then there is no end to its ambition—no limit to its hopes—no boundary to its aims; it would engross the whole soul and would gain the whole world. There never was a more blind and stupid spirit. It aims after what it does not need and cannot use. It longs to attain that which has no other tendency than to prove a burden. And this stupidity and blindness are not to be cured by moral lectures. Lecture to rock as soon. *I. S. Spencer.*—The man that accumulates wealth lives for himself. He gathers into his coffers, and he entertains his friends; old age creeps upon him. You know what he is; an isolation, a monument in the midst of a wilderness, a monument of miserliness, of selfishness, a monument that stands solitary. *Bp. Carpenter.*

13. This their way. Both the meaning and the construction of this clause are doubtful. It may mean (1) "This their way (*i.e.*, manner of life, course of conduct) is their folly;" or (2) "This their prosperous condition is (or becomes) their infatuation (blind confidence);" for *kēsēl* may mean "a stupid security

or presumptuous confidence," as well as "folly." As regards the construction, it may be as above, or the clause may consist of two independent sentences: "This is their way; they have confidence;" or finally, the latter part of it may be a relative sentence (as Ewald takes it): "This is the way of those who are foolish." P.—The most probable meaning of this rather obscure verse is, "This is the way of men who are self-confident, and of those after them who approve their sayings." The *Selah* marks the climax—viz., that they should feel such utterly foolish confidence and transmit their notions to their posterity. *Cook.*—Notwithstanding the gross folly of such sinners, as proved by the end to which it brings them, they will still find some to walk in their footsteps and to share their ruin. Against this propagated and perpetuated folly there is a tacit but emphatic protest in the meditative pause which follows, and in the *Selah* which denotes it. A.

The world reckons sins not by the inward contrariety to God, but by the outward excesses; and therefore if covetous and worldly men do not break out into acts foul and shameful, they have much of the honor and respect of the world. "Their way," according to the Psalmist, "is folly, yet their posterity praise their sayings"—that is, praise and esteem such a course of life. It is quite possible for the Lord to abhor those whom men bless; for they do not measure sin so much by the *inward enmity* as by the *outward excess*. God's hatred arises from *His own purity*—but man's from the external inconveniences of *disgrace and loss*. *Manton.*

There is nothing more contagious than example. The multitude are possessed with foolish admiring of worldly greatness, treasures, and delights, neglecting to make a due estimation of things. It is the ordinary artifice of the devil to render temporal things more valuable and attractive to particular persons, from the common practice of men who greedily pursue them as their happiness; as some crafty merchants by false reports raise the exchange, to advance the price of their own wares. The men of the world think those only wise and happy that shine in pomp, abound in riches, and overflow in pleasures. *Bates.*—Let the reader note how true to the human nature and life of to-day are these records of the life and thought of the rich and worldly men of twenty-five hundred years ago. "Selah;" let this be thought of deeply and laid to heart. C.

14. A further description of the end of these

rich fools. They perish like cattle (v. 12); they are laid in the grave; they descend to Hades (*Sheol*, the world of spirits), and there they are like a flock of sheep, with death for their shepherd, their beauty and their glory gone. P.—*Like a flock to the grave they drive; death is their shepherd; and the righteous shall rule over them in the morning; and their form the grave (is) to consume; from (their) home to Him (they go or they belong).* This is one of the most obscure and difficult verses in the book, although its general meaning is obvious enough. The figure of a flock is carried out by representing death as the shepherd, by whom they are led or driven. The literal meaning of the words is, *Death shall feed them*, but the Hebrew verb means to feed as a shepherd; or rather to perform the whole office of a shepherd. A.—*Death shall be their shepherd, taking them in charge as the shepherd does his flock.* This seems to be the precise sense of the Hebrew verb and its pronoun. They are as sheep, both in their wholesale slaughter and in their falling under the control of death, conceived of as the monarch of the myriads of the dead. The upright shall tread over their fresh graves “in the morning,” for their pleasure-life has been said (v. 12) not to outlast the night. These men, wicked, proud, and rich, are hurried in throngs, like sheep, from their splendid palaces and magnificent estates into the dark and dismal grave—death their shepherd there. Corruption quickly mars their beauty. The earthly homes they built for immortality are their dwelling-places no longer. C.

The upright have dominion in the morning. What is meant is a morning, which will be the end of oppression and the dawning of dominion, not only for individual righteous men, but for all the upright; the godless are rooted out, and the righteous now triumph over their graves. In this the end of all history is expressed in Old Testament fashion. According to the New Testament view also, history closes with the triumph of good over evil. D.

15. In grand contrast to all this stands the hope of the righteous. God will redeem him from the hand of *Sheol*, death has put forth his hand and seized him, but is forced to surrender his captive, for God takes him to Himself (Gen. 5 : 24). This is the plain meaning. To suppose that the Psalmist speaks of deliverance before death is absurd; such a hope would put him on a level with the merest fool, who knows at least that redemption from the universal doom is impossible. It is satisfactory to find those

critics who are least inclined to admit anticipations of the Gospel in the Old Testament agreed in this interpretation. None defends it more forcibly than Hupfeld. He says truly that it is not stated as a revealed doctrine, but as a presentiment, a deep inward conviction inseparable from real living faith in a living God. Cook.

The lot of the righteous is now contrasted with that of the wicked, but with a personal application to the Psalmist himself, “God shall redeem my soul.” *From the power of the unseen world*, literally, “from the hand of *Sheol*,” i.e., the grave and Hades. *For He shall take me.* This short half-verse is, as Böttcher remarks, the more weighty from its very shortness. The same expression occurs again (73 : 24), “Thou shalt take me;” the original of both being Gen. 5 : 24, where it is used of the translation of Enoch, “He was not; for God *took* him.” We have, then, in this passage, again (cf. 16 : 11 ; 17 : 15), the strong hope of eternal life with God, if not the hope of a resurrection. In the preceding verse, in the very midst of the gloomy picture which he draws of the end of the ungodly, there breaks forth one morning ray of light—the bright anticipation of the final triumph of the good over the evil. This is the inextinguishable hope which animates the Church of the Old Testament, as well as that of the New. Righteousness *shall* eventually, must in its very nature, reign upon the earth. The wicked shall find their end in *Sheol* (see 9 : 18), and the righteous shall trample on their graves. This, and not more than this, seems to have been the meaning, originally, of the Psalmist in the words, “And the righteous have dominion over them in the morning.” But now that he comes to speak of himself, and his own personal relation to God, he rises into a higher strain. He who knows and loves God has the life of God, and can never perish. That life must survive even the shock of death. “God,” says the Psalmist, “shall redeem my soul from the hand of Hades, for He shall take me,” as He took Enoch, and as He took Elijah to Himself. We are not, of course, to suppose that he himself expected to be taken up alive to heaven; but those great facts of former ages were God’s witnesses to man of His immortality, and of the reality of a life with Him beyond this world. It is a hope based on facts like these which here shines forth. It is a hope, not a revealed certainty. It rests on no distinct promise; it has not assumed the definite form of a doctrine. But it was enough to raise, to cheer, to encourage those who saw ungodliness

prospering in this world. The end of the wicked, after all, was a thick darkness which had never been penetrated; the end of the righteous, life with God. P.

God and He only will redeem my soul from the hand of Sheol; for He will take me, *i.e.*, to Himself. No such state awaits me in the under-world as awaits the ungodly; for my God will take me to His own mansions. The force of the first Hebrew word "only" is quite left out in the English version. It is a thought too precious to be missed. God alone; no other arm save His; I know no other; I trust none other; God by His own Divine arm will redeem my soul from the death-power of Sheol, and from his dominion, compared just before to that of the shepherd controlling his sheep.

C.—It is wrong to deny to the Old Testament writers a belief in a future life. Death with them was not an eternal sleep. Death also did not leave them mere shades wandering aimlessly on another shore. No, stronger than death was love of Jehovah, and with Him there must be life hereafter. *E. L. Curtis.*—The righteous has hope in his death, so has the Psalmist here hope in God concerning his soul. The believing hopes of the soul's redemption from the grave, and reception to glory, are the great support and joy of the children of God in a dying hour. He redeems their souls that He may receive them (31:5). *Into Thy hands I commit my spirit, for Thou hast redeemed it.* He will receive them into His favor, will admit them into His kingdom, into the mansions that are prepared for them (John 14:2, 3), those everlasting habitations (Luke 16:9). H.

16. *Be not thou afraid because a man grows rich, because the glory of his house increases.* Here begins the application or practical conclusion of the foregoing meditations. It is marked by a change of form, the Psalmist now no longer speaking of himself, but to himself or to another, as the person most directly interested in his subject. A.

17. *When he dies it is taken for granted that he goes into another world himself, but he shall carry nothing away with him* of all that which he has been so long heaping up. The greatest and wealthiest cannot therefore be the happiest, because they are never the better for their living in this world; as they came naked into it, they shall go naked out of it. But those have something to show in the other world, for their living in this world, who can say, through grace, that though they came corrupt, and sinful, and spiritually naked into it, they go renewed and sanctified, and well clothed with the

righteousness of Christ. H.—All our pieces of gold are but current to the grave; none of them will pass in the future world. Therefore as merchants when they travel make over their moneys here, to receive them by bills of exchange in another country; let us do good with our goods while we live, that when we die, by a blessed bill of exchange, we may receive them again in the kingdom of heaven. To part with that we cannot keep, that we may get that we cannot lose, is a good bargain. Wealth can do us no good, unless it help us toward heaven. *Adams.*

An Eastern legend furnishes a remarkable, though unconscious commentary on these words of the Psalmist. Alexander the Great, we are told, being upon his death-bed commanded that, when he was carried forth to the grave, his hands should not be wrapped, as was usual, in the serecloths, but should be left outside the bier, so that all men might see them, and might see that they were *empty*; that there was nothing in them; that he, born to one empire, and the conqueror of another, the possessor, while he lived, of two worlds, of the East, and of the West, and of the treasures of both, yet now when he was dead could retain no smallest portion of those treasures; that in this matter the poorest beggar and he were at length upon equal terms. This was his comment, or the comment of those who may have devised this legend, on the text of the Psalmist. "He shall carry nothing away with him when he dieth; neither shall his pomp follow him." This was his anticipation of the declaration of the apostle, "We brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." *Anon.*

It is only the meaner things of the earth which lie under the bondage of corruption, which refuse to accompany their owners on that last long journey which, one day or other, every man must make. Whatever is of true value and dignity, whatever is really worth the winning, whatever is akin to the Divine and immortal in man, whatever comes to him from God through Christ (and this includes every good and perfect gift), of all that, nothing can rob him. He *shall* carry it away with him when he dieth, to be his riches and treasure in the life eternal, as it was his riches and treasure here. *Trench.*—Let us see to it that not in utter nakedness do we go hence, but clothed with that immortal robe, and rich in those possessions that cannot be taken away from us, which they have who have lived on earth as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. Let us pierce, for the foundation of our life's house,

beneath the shifting sands of time down to the Rock of Ages, and build there. A. M.

Even in regard of earthly things, while it is quite true that a man can *carry* nothing of them away with him *when* he dies, he may *send* much of them before him while he lives. The Apostle Paul declares no less when, urging those who are rich that they be glad to distribute, he proposes this as a motive, that they will be thus "laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come." God will not forget the least of these things that are wrought for His name's sake. *Trench.*

—The world teacheth me that it is madness to leave behind me those goods that I may carry with me. Christianity teacheth me that what I charitably give alive, I carry with me dead; and experience teacheth me that what I leave behind, I lose. I will carry that treasure with me by giving it, which the worldling loseth by keeping it; so, while his corpse shall carry nothing but a winding cloth to his grave, I shall be richer under the earth than I was above it. *Bishop H.*

Character is that which alone we can carry with us out of the world. Everything else, fame, fortune, station, influence, must be left behind; but our character will be our own. If it has been built up of holy aims, and sacred emotions, and the experience of charity and faith; if it has been so shaped and featured that we may trace upon it the image of Jesus; if it is beautiful with the image of penitence, and cheerful obedience, and sweet submission; then it is our unspeakable treasure—our family likeness to the redeemed, the token of our relationship to the Holy Spirit before the throne. It constitutes, by the grace of God, our title to the rank of the nobility of heaven. E. H. G.

18. While he lived, literally, *in his life*, that life which to him was all in all, to which his hopes and joys were confined. **He blessed his soul**, *i.e.*, congratulated himself on his prosperity, and indulged all his appetites. **Men will praise thee**. A fine point in the sarcasm; the rich man's self-congratulations are echoed by his neighbors; they admire his luxury, his self-indulgence, and repeat his axioms. It is remarkable how the Psalmist exhausts the subject; of all trials to the faith of thoughtful observers none is greater than to see the "honor, reverence, and troops of friends" which surround the rich man, as such, to the very end. *Cook.*

This verse assigns the reason of the fact alleged in the one before it. The wealthy sinner is to carry nothing with him when he dies, be-

cause he is to have his "good things" in the present life. This is God's appointment in accordance with his own free choice. *In his life* (or *lifetime*), as long as he lives, *he is to bless his soul* (or *himself*), *i.e.*, to reckon himself happy, and to be so esteemed by others. In the last clause, the third person is abruptly exchanged for the second, and the wealthy sinner, of whom the Psalmist had been speaking to himself or his disciple, is directly addressed, as if personally present. This application of the figure called apostrophe is made with great skill and rhetorical effect. There is pungent sarcasm in the close of this verse; they will praise thee because thou doest good—to *thyself*. Or, because thou doest well—for *thyself*. The addition of this last phrase serves to characterize vividly not only the rich sinner, but his flatterers. There can be little doubt that our Saviour tacitly alluded to the first clause of this verse, when He made Abraham say to Dives, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented" (Luke 16:25). This is indeed a most instructive commentary on the passage now before us, as exhibiting the future revolution in the relative position of the parties, as a reason for not envying the wealthy sinner now. It is equally certain that the Rich Fool's address to his own soul, in Luke 12:19, was suggested by the same clause of the Psalm before us, *in his lifetime he will bless his soul*. Indeed the whole conception of the Rich Man in the one case, and the Rich Fool in the other, may be said to be borrowed from this Psalm, and may therefore derive instructive and interesting illustration from it. A.

To-day God gives us time, and with it opportunity. The precious gift is in our hands; the past cannot be recalled; the future cannot be foreseen. To-morrow, of which we so often boast ourselves, may never come to us. We do not live to-morrow. The man who owns whole blocks of real estate and great ships on the sea does not own a single minute of to-morrow! *Anon.*

Of the priceless gift of time, how much will one day be seen to have been lost; how ruinous shall we deem our investment of this our most precious stock! How many interests, occupations, engagements, friendships—I speak not of the avowed ways of "killing time," as it is termed with piteous accuracy—will be then regarded only as so many expedients for assuring our failure to compass the true end of our existence! It may not now seem possible that

we should ever think thus. Life is like the summer's day ; and in the first fresh morning we do not realize the noonday heat, and at noon we do not think of the shadows lengthening across the plain, and of the setting sun, and of the advancing night. Yet, to each and all, the sunset comes at last ; and those who have made most of the day are not unlikely to reflect how little they have made of it. H. P. L.

19. Go to the generation of his fathers. The clause has reference to the frequent description of death in the Old Testament as a man's sleeping with his fathers, or being gathered to his fathers. The meaning of the whole verse is, that the wealthy sinner is to die

as his fathers died before him, and continue dead like them, without returning to revisit, much less to repossess, the riches and honors which he once imagined were to last forever. This completes the proof that these advantages are not legitimate or even rational occasions of envious dissatisfaction to the righteous.

20. At the close of the first strophe, the rich fool is compared to the brutes that perish, with respect to the uncertainty of his enjoyments ; and again at the close of the second, with respect to his irrationality, the points of comparison being distinct but inseparable. No wonder that the sinner is cut off unawares like the brutes, when in fact he is equally irrational. A.

PSALM L.

A PSALM OF ASAPH.

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| <p>1 God, <i>even</i> God, the LORD, hath spoken,
And called the earth from the rising of the
sun unto the going down thereof.</p> <p>2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God hath shined forth.</p> <p>3 Our God shall come, and shall not keep
silence :
A fire shall devour before him,
And it shall be very tempestuous round
about him.</p> <p>4 He shall call to the heavens above,
And to the earth, that he may judge his
people :</p> <p>5 Gather my saints [<i>beloved</i>] together unto
me ;
Those that have made a covenant with me
by sacrifice.</p> <p>6 And the heavens shall declare his righteous-
ness ;
For God is judge himself. [Selah]</p> <p>7 Hear, O my people, and I will speak ;
O Israel, and I will testify unto [<i>against</i>]
thee :
I am God, <i>even</i> thy God.</p> <p>8 I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices ;
And thy burnt offerings are continually be-
fore me.</p> <p>9 I will take no bullock out of thy house,
Nor he-goats out of thy folds.</p> | <p>10 For every beast of the forest is mine,
And the cattle upon a thousand hills.</p> <p>11 I know all the fowls of the mountains :
And the wild beasts of the field are mine.</p> <p>12 If I were hungry, I would not tell thee :
For the world is mine, and the fulness
thereof.</p> <p>13 Will I eat the flesh of bulls,
Or drink the blood of goats ?</p> <p>14 Offer unto God the sacrifice of thanksgiv-
ing ;
And pay thy vows unto the Most High :</p> <p>15 And call upon me in the day of trouble ;
I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify
me.</p> <p>16 But unto the wicked God saith,
What hast thou to do to declare my statutes,
And that thou hast taken my covenant in
thy mouth ?</p> <p>17 Seeing thou hatest instruction,
And castest my words behind thee.</p> <p>18 When thou sawest a thief, thou consentedst
with him,
And hast been partaker with adulterers.</p> <p>19 Thou givest thy mouth to evil,
And thy tongue frameth deceit.</p> <p>20 Thou sittest and speakest against thy
brother ;
Thou slanderest thine own mother's son.</p> |
|--|---|

21 These things hast thou done, and I kept silence ;

Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself :

But I will reprove thee, and set *them* in order before thine eyes.

22 Now consider this, ye that forget God,

Lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver :

23 Whoso offereth the sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifieth me ;

And to him that ordereth his conversation *aright*

Will I shew the salvation of God.

THIS is the first of twelve Psalms that bear the name of Asaph. The others (73-83) are the first eleven of the third book. Asaph and his sons were leaders of four out of the twenty-four classes into which the musical service for Divine worship was divided by David (1 Chr. 23 : 2-5). As a writer of Psalms Asaph is mentioned with David in 2 Chr. 29 : 30, where he is also called "the seer." The Asaphic Psalms have several characteristics in common. They are distinguished by loftiness of tone, combined with spirited and picturesque expression, and especially by their frequent exhibition of the sovereign judgment of God as determining the future. *De Witt.*

This Psalm furnishes us with no evidence as to the time of its composition, but in elegance and sublimity of language, in force and dignity, it is worthy of the best days of Hebrew poetry. It is a magnificent exposition of the true nature of that service and worship which God requires from man. It rebukes the folly which thinks that religion is a matter of sacrifices and gifts, and declares that obedience and thanksgiving are the true fulfilling of the law. It condemns alike a prevalent formalism and a prevalent hypocrisy. How needful it was to insist upon such truths we learn from the whole history of Israel and the perpetual and indignant remonstrances of the prophets. The tendency to substitute the outward act for the inward, the sacrifices of bulls and goats for the sacrifice of thanksgiving, was deeply ingrained in the nation, till at last it ossified in Pharisaism, and wore its most hideous aspect on that day of solemn Passover, when the sacrifices of the law were offered by those whose hands were stained with the greatest crime which the world has seen. In its general tone and character it is essentially prophetic. In vs. 8-15 Hengstenberg remarks that prevailing errors as to the *first* table of the law, the worship of God, are condemned. In vs. 16-21 the discourse turns to the *second* table. Here those are reprov'd who have the law of God constantly in their mouths, and at the same time wickedly transgress it in their behavior toward their neighbor. P.

The theme of this Psalm is, *God, the Judge of all the earth*, holding men to sincere and honest worship of God and to intrinsic righteousness toward men, *i.e.*, to obedience as to both the first table of the law and the second. Under the first head, God does not reprove His people for failure in the external rites of sacrifice and offering, but insists upon thanksgiving, the payment of vows, and prayer for Divine help in all trouble. The wicked He rebukes for insincere religion ; for a heart utterly out of sympathy with God's Word and will, and *in* sympathy with thieves, adulterers, and with slander of nearest friends. C.

This ode, sublime in its imagery and its scenic breadth of conception, is a canon of the relationship of men, as professed worshippers of God, toward Him who spurns from His presence the hypocrite and the profligate and the malignant, but invites the sincere and the humble on terms of favor. The Psalm is sternly moral in its tone, and makes its way with anatomic keenness through the surface to the conscience of those who are easily content with themselves, so long as they keep clear of overt acts of sin. It is God's voice we hear, for man has never spoken in any such manner as this to his fellows. I. T.

The central thought of this Psalm is the inefficacy of outward sacrifices compared with the offerings of the heart and purity of life. The same principle is distinctly recognized in the Davidic Psalms (see 40 : 6, 8 ; 69 : 30, 31 ; 51 : 16, 17) and by all the prophets, but is nowhere set forth more explicitly and solemnly than in this Psalm ; the circumstance that it is the composition of a chief among the Levites, whose whole life was devoted to the temple-service, is specially important, showing how unfounded is the notion of a spirit of opposition or rivalry between the prophetic and priestly orders in the best days of Israel. *Cook.*

1-6. A magnificent exordium, in which the whole scene of judgment is described. As formerly, at the *giving* of the law on Sinai, so now, God is represented as appearing in Zion for the explanation of it, and for judgment

against its transgressors. He comes with all the terrors of thunder and lightning and storm. He summons before His judgment-seat those whom He has taken into covenant with Himself; and at the same time, as exercising universal dominion, He calls heaven and earth to be His witnesses against them. P—The exordium of this Psalm is the most grand and striking that can possibly be imagined—the speaker God, the audience an assembled world! We cannot compare or assimilate the scene here presented with any human resemblance; nor will earth ever behold such a day till that hour when the trumpet of the archangel shall sound, and shall gather all the nations of the earth from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other; when the dead, small and great, shall stand before God. *Bouchier.*

1. Three Divine names are put together in a kind of climax, *El, Elohim, Jehovah*. The first represents God as almighty, the second as the only proper object of worship and (by its plural form) as perfect, the third as self-existent and eternal, and at the same time as the peculiar God of Israel. The same combination occurs in Josh. 22:22. It is here intended to enhance the grandeur of the scene by setting forth the titles of the judge or sovereign. A.—The Psalm opens with the three most common and distinct names of God—*El, Elohim, Jehovah*—best rendered, the Almighty, God, Jehovah or Lord. The first gives the element of supreme power; the second, that combination of infinite qualities which makes Him the only proper object of worship; the third, makes prominent His changeless, eternal nature, and consequently His faithfulness to His word. The name *Jehovah* commonly represents Him as the God of His covenant people. This great God hath spoken and hath convened the whole earth, summoning all before His tribunal, from extremest east to remotest west. C.

2. When the Bible speaks of Zion as the dwelling-place of God, it is but the expression of the fact that there, between the cherubim, was the visible sign of His presence—that there, in the temple, as from the centre of the whole land, He ruled, and “out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shone.” The idea of the dwelling of God with men had its less perfect embodiment, has its more perfect embodiment, will have its absolutely perfect embodiment. It had its less perfect in that ancient time. It has its real but partial embodiment in this present time, when, in the midst of the whole community of believing and loving souls, which stretches wider than any society

that calls itself a church, the living God abides and energizes by His Spirit and by His Son in the souls of them that believe upon Him. “Ye are come unto Mount Zion and unto the city of the living God.” And we wait for the time when, filling all the air with its light, there shall come down from God a perfect and permanent form of that dwelling; and that great city, the New Jerusalem, “having the glory of God,” shall appear, and He will dwell with men and be their God. But in all these stages of the embodiment of that great truth the glory of Zion rests in this, that in it God abides, that from it He flames in the greatness of His manifestations, which are “His praise in all the earth.” It is that presence which makes her fair, as it is that presence which keeps her safe. A. M.

3 (*first clause*). The future in the first clause may be rendered *He is coming*, as if the sound of His voice and the light of His glory had preceded His actual appearance. The imagery is borrowed from the giving of the law at Sinai. A.—He who has given the law will enter into judgment with those who have it and do not observe it; He cannot forever look on in silence. He must punish in the first instance with words, in order to warn against punishment by deeds. Fire and storm are the heralds of the Law-giver of Sinai who appears as Judge. The fire threatens to consume the sinners, and the storm threatens to drive them away like chaff. The fire is His wrath, and the storm the power of His wrath. D.

Our Lord Jesus has been prophesied of in this Psalm, wherein we have heard and sung, “God will come manifested, our God, and will not keep silence.” For the Lord Christ Himself, our God, the Son of God, in His first Advent came hidden, in His second will come manifested. When He came hidden, He was known only to His own servants; when He will come manifested, He will be known both to good and bad. When He came hidden, He came to be judged; when He will come manifested, He will come to judge. Lastly, when at that time He was judged, He kept silence; and of His silence the prophet had foretold, “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearers so He opened not His mouth.” But He will not be silent when He is to judge, as He was when He was to be judged. Even now, if there is any one to listen, He is not silent; but, it is said, then “He will not keep silence,” when even those who now condemn His voice shall recognize it. *Augustine.*

The Son of God will come in His glory with His angels. For "He will come, and will not keep silence"—that is, when He will come to judge the quick and the dead, and to render to every man according to his work; when that trumpet with its great and terrible sound will awaken those who have slept since the world began, and they will "come forth, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation." Remember the heaven-sent vision of Daniel, how it brings the judgment before our eyes. "I beheld," he says, "until thrones were set, and the Ancient of days did sit; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool, and His wheels a burning fire. A river of fire was rolling before Him. Thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him; a judgment was set, and books were opened;" books openly unfolded, things good, things bad, things manifest, things hidden, acts, words, thoughts, all things at once, so as to be heard by all, both men and angels. And those who have led evil lives, with what feeling must they needs face all this? *Basil.*

6. And (now) the heavens have declared His righteousness, for God (is) judge Himself. *Selah.* The heavens are witnesses of God's judicial rectitude, for *He Himself* (and not a delegated man or angel) *is the judge.* The parties and the witnesses having been summoned, the judicial process now begins. The pause, denoted by the *Selah*, is one indicative of awe, excited by the dread solemnity of these proceedings. **A.**—All this confessedly metaphorical representation of a judicial period is intended undoubtedly to convey the solemn general truth that every man's religion will one day be tried as by fire. We may deceive ourselves, as well as others now; but the undeceiving period draweth near, and a period of inexpressible solemnity it will be to us all. *D. Thomas.*

7-15. From His judgment-seat God solemnly rebukes the errors and delusions which prevailed as to the nature of His service. He reminds His people of the peculiar relation in which they stand to Him, and asks if they can believe that sacrifices, merely as sacrifices, can be of any value to Him who has all creatures at His command. Thanksgiving and prayer are the sacrifices in which He delights, and these will best avail in the day of trouble. **P.**—God will not enter into judgment with them on account of sacrifices in the external sense, for He needs not sacrifices from Israel. His is

every wild beast of the forest, His are the animals upon the mountains of thousands, *i.e.*, the thousand (and more than thousand) mountains. **D.**—"I am not now rebuking thee for neglecting the forms and ritualities of sacrifice. This is not the charge brought against thee. It is not thy bullocks or he-goats that I now demand. All the cattle of the earth—the wild and the tame—are Mine." The "beasts of the forest" are wild animals, while the cattle on the hills are domestic. The tone of these verses seem to imply that Israel had not been specially deficient in the rituals and externals of the Mosaic system. It also implies that God regards the worship of the heart as incomparably more important than these externals. **C.**

The reason for this act of judgment is given. First, negatively; it is not because the people had neglected the externals of the law, or had forgotten to offer the sacrifices appointed by the law. They had brought them; but they had brought them as if the act were everything, and as if the meaning of the act and the spirit in which it was done were nothing. But God demands no service for its own sake, but only as the expression of an obedient will. A thankful heart is more than all burnt-offerings. The prophets are full of the like sentiments. Thus, in Isaiah, God expostulates, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams" (1:12). Micah asks, "Will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams?" (6:6-8.) Hosea testifies, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." And so deep-rooted was this tendency in the people to exaggerate the importance of the dead work, to bring the sacrifice of the dumb animal instead of the sacrifice of the heart, that Jeremiah carries the opposition between sacrifices and obedience to the extreme of a paradox (7:22, 23). **P.**

To obey is better than sacrifice, and to love God and our neighbor, *better than all burnt-offerings*, so much better that God by His prophets often told them that their sacrifices were not only not acceptable, but abominable to Him, while they lived in sin; instead of pleasing Him, He looked upon them as a mockery, and therefore an affront and provocation to Him. They are therefore here warned not to rest in these performances; but to conduct themselves, in all other instances, toward God as their God. **H.**—It is even so to day. Sacraments (so called) and sacred rites are the main concern with unconverted but religious men, but with the Most High the spiritual worship which they forget is the sole matter. Let the

external be maintained by all means according to the Divine command, but if the secret and spiritual be not in them, they are a vain oblation, a dead ritual, and even an abomination before the Lord. S.

12. There is no portion of our time that is our time, and the rest God's; there is no portion of money that is our money, and the rest God's money. It is all His; He made it all, gives it all, and He has simply trusted it to us for His service. A servant has two purses, the master's and his own; but we have only one. *Monod.*

13. *Will I eat the flesh of bulls and drink the blood of goats?* The future of the Hebrew verb is very expressive, suggesting the ideas of possibility, necessity, and desire. Do I desire the flesh and blood of beasts for My refreshment? Do I need them for My sustenance? Or is it even possible for Me to use them, in the way that you imagine? The negative answer, which is obviously expected to these questions, presupposes the great doctrine that Jehovah is a spirit and as such exempt from all corporeal necessities. This, then, is another refutation of the gross and impious error that He needed their oblations. If they were necessary in themselves, He could obtain them elsewhere; and that they are not necessary, follows as an inevitable consequence from the spirituality of the Divine nature. This is the language of impassioned and indignant expostulation, holding up the absurdities, to which the error of the formal worshipper inevitably tended, as a refutation of the error itself. A.

14, 15. There follows now, positively, what God requires. The sacrifices which He would have are thanksgiving and the prayer of faith in the time of trouble. Under the name of *thanksgiving* and *prayer* all the rest of religion is comprehended. P.—On the side of things positively required stand *thanksgiving*—the grateful acknowledgment of mercies received from God; a perpetual recognition of His favors and of the love from which they come. Next, the *payment of vows* unto the Most High, *i.e.*, honest and truthful dealing with God, recognizing Him as really existing, and a vow to Him therefore as a real obligation to a personal being. Next (remarkably) God invites (shall we not say requires?) them to call upon Himself in the day of their trouble, giving the promise that in such case He will *set them free* from such trouble and they shall glorify Him for this deliverance. The beautiful thing here is that God seems to recognize it as one of His rights and privileges to be called upon by His

people for help in their time of need, asking only that then they suitably acknowledge His delivering grace and give Him the honor due therefor. Is it not wonderful? Yet it is like God! C.

14. Offer unto God thanksgiving, literally, “sacrifice thanksgiving;” *i.e.*, instead of the legal “sacrifice of peace offerings for a thanksgiving or a vow” (Lev. 7: 11–16), the true worshipper must offer that which the victim represents—viz., praise from a grateful heart, and all duties to which he is bound by the terms of his covenant with God. This does not imply that the outer forms are to be omitted, but that they are valueless, except as the expression of genuine devotion and obedience to God's will. The reader must always bear in mind the Hebrew idiom, which, if taken literally, would seem to condemn that which it simply represents as of subordinate and conditional importance. It must not be supposed that this view implies a more advanced stage of religious consciousness than is found in the Pentateuch; for in that book all the obligations of the law are summed up in circumcision of the heart, and duty to God and man resting on the one great central principle of love. *Cook.*

Everywhere throughout Scripture is gratitude represented as a necessary quality of acceptable prayer. A humble heart not only brings the sin-offering before the Lord, but the thank-offering. Hear the duties of the devout life summed up in a few brief sentences: “Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High; call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee; and thou shalt glorify Me.” And study well an example full of these important lessons. Paul and Silas, covered with bruises, their feet in the stocks, cast into the dungeon of the prison, if they had been like some people we have seen, would have forgotten praise in the agony of prayer for deliverance. But it seems they “sang praises to God, and the prisoners heard them.” Aye, and God heard them. *Potts.*—*Call upon Me in the day of trouble.* Our troubles, though we see them coming from God's hand, must drive us to Him, and not drive us from Him. We must thus acknowledge Him in all our ways, depend upon His wisdom, power, and goodness, and refer ourselves entirely to Him, and so give Him glory. This is a readier way of seeking His favor than by a peace-offering, and yet more acceptable. When He in answer to our prayers delivers us, as He has promised to do in such a way and time as He shall think fit, we must glorify Him, not only by a grateful

mention of His favor, but by living to His praise. Thus must we keep up our communion with God ; meeting Him with our prayers when He afflicts us, and with our praises when He delivers us. H.

Thankfulness should mingle with all our thoughts and feelings, like the fragrance of some penetrating perfume through the common scentless air. It should embrace all events. It should be an operating motion in all actions. We should be clear-sighted and believing enough to be thankful for pain and disappointment and loss. That gratitude will add the crowning consecration to service and knowledge and endurance. It will touch our spirits to the finest of all issues, for it will lead to glad self-surrender, and make of our whole life a sacrifice of praise. A. M.

Prayer is the outlet of the saints' sorrows and the inlet of their supports and comforts. *Flavel*. —If your mind be overcharged with trouble and anxiety, go into the presence of God and spread your case before Him. Though He knows the desires of your hearts, yet He has declared He "will be sought after;" He will be "inquired of to do it for you." Go, therefore, into the presence of that God who will at once tranquillize your spirit, give you what you wish, or make you more happy without it, and who will be your everlasting consolation if you trust in Him. He will breathe peace into your soul, and command tranquillity in the midst of the greatest storms. How much are they to be pitied who never pray ! R. Hall.

The boldest words from a loving heart, jealous of God's honor, are not irreverent in His eyes. Perfect love casts out fear and deepens reverence. We may come with free hearts, from which every weight of trembling and every cloud of doubt has been lifted. But the less the dread, the lower we shall bow before the loftiness which we love. We do not pray aright until we tell God everything. The boldness which we as Christians ought to have means literally a frank speaking out of all that is in our hearts. Such "boldness and access with confidence" will often make short work of so-called seemly reverence, but it will never transgress by so much as a hair's-breadth the limits of lowly, trustful love. A. M.

16-21. There were those in Israel who not only exalted the outward service unduly, but who made its punctual observance a cloak for and a makeweight against their iniquity. The first evil, indeed, of superstitious formalism naturally engendered the still deadlier evil of conscious hypocrisy. Against hypocrites the

Divine rebuke is now directed. Compare Rom. 2 : 17-24. P.—This earnest rebuke applies in all its force to those who by acts more or less public recognize God's law as binding and take His covenant into their lips, yet in heart hate the restraints of duty to God, hate the instruction which demands a holy life, and thrust from them the claims of God. C.—We may deny Christ in our action and practice, and these speak much louder than our tongue. To have an orthodox belief and profession concurring with a bad life, is only to deny Christ with a greater solemnity. *South*.

19, 20. Mischief and slander are brought out here. The first verb, "*givest*," is strong ; sendest forth, giving it unbounded range and no restraint ; making the doing of evil its distinct and direct function, its mission, its business. The tongue concocts deceit—artful schemes for mischief. "Sittest and speakest"—as if sitting down to a day's work, making a business of slander. C.

21. *These things hast thou done, and I have held My peace ; thou hast imagined I was just like thyself. I will reprove thee, and array (thy sins) before thine eyes.* God is described as silent when He does not interpose with His reproofs or manifest His displeasure. *Array*, arrange, set in order, so that none shall be omitted or overlooked. *Before thine eyes*, literally, to thine eyes, or to thy face, again implying that the sight of them is not to be avoided. This declaration of severe fidelity forms an appropriate conclusion to the second lesson of the Psalm, or that in which the mask is stripped off from the vicious hypocrite, who professes to serve God while he lives in the grossest violation of His precepts, as in the first part (vs. 7-15) it was torn from the formal hypocrite, who satisfies himself with a mere outward and mechanical performance of rites designed to be significant of spiritual and devout affections. A.

Because the sinner is allowed to go on long unpunished, he waxes confident by his impunity, and imagines that God is like himself, and that good and evil are things indifferent ; not that he *says* so in words, but his conduct shows his ignorance both of the exceeding sinfulness of sin and of the truth and righteousness of God. P.—"Because vengeance against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart is fully set on evil." So here : While thou wast committing these sins I kept silence ; and then, so far from interpreting this silence as only the longsuffering of God designed for salvation, to give thee space to repent, thou

thoughtest that I was really and entirely like thyself—well enough pleased with sin and sinners. C.

I kept silence. God *has* spoken, and now He is giving mankind a trial, to see whether they will heed what He says. "All things continue as they were;" and an infidel may deny God if he pleases, and a bad man may defy God if he pleases. No lightning falls from heaven to blast him who denies, or him who defies. Since we know God to be grievously displeased with sin, there is something very awful in His keeping silence while it is committed under His eyes. In countries where earthquakes happen, a dead silence always goes before the earthquake. So it is with God's silence. It will be followed, when it seems deepest, by the earthquake of His judgments. E. M. G.

I will lay in order—the whole sin in all its evil course, its poisonous root, and its deadly branches shall be put before the man. The sin that he did and would not look at, God shall make him look upon. The sin which he thought he could hide from God, or which, with strange infatuation, he supposed God took no notice of, shall be proclaimed upon the housetops. P.—What a narrow and finite apprehension this is of God! He that causeth and produceth every action—shall He not be present at every action? What can we do without Him that cannot move but in Him? He that takes notice of sparrows and numbers the seeds which the very ploughman thrusts in the ground, can any action of man escape His knowledge or slip from His contemplation? He may seem to wink at things, but never shuts His eyes. He doth not always manifest a reprehensive knowledge, yet He always retains an apprehensive knowledge. T. Adams.

Men think that some declarations of God are fitted only to make them mad; that He takes little notice of these things and will easily pass them by, as they suppose better becomes Him. This is their inward thought, "The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil," which, says the Psalmist, is men's "thinking that God is such a one as themselves." They have no serious thoughts of His greatness, holiness, purity, severity, but think He is like themselves, so far as not to be much moved with what they do. If, with them, a slight ejaculation be enough to expiate sin that their consciences be no more troubled, they think it is enough with God that it be not punished. All sin's concernments flow from its relation to God; and as men's apprehensions are of God

so will they be of sin, which is an opposition to Him. This is the frame of the most of men; they know little of God and are little troubled about anything that relates to Him. God is not revered, sin is but a trifle, forgiveness is a matter of nothing; whoso will may have it for asking! Whereas he who is not acquainted with God's holiness and purity, who knows not sin's desert and sinfulness, knows nothing of forgiveness. Owen.

No searching can find out in Scripture any plans or promises of winning offers and tender appeals, that are to be made to those in the next world, who abuse the strivings of the Holy Spirit in this world. Therefore we would shudder to encourage people to depend upon calls to repentance after death, of which there is no echo in this world, or indication in the Word of God. We are not called upon to believe in the perdition tortures of Dante, Milton, Edwards, and others of olden time. But we do believe, and bow our heads to Him who, the gentle Jesus that He was, spoke again and again of the consequences of continued sin, in a way to make it frightfully sure that, beyond the sight of this world, there is a scene of retribution, which is unrelieved by the joys of redemption. J. L. Withrow.

22. Men live "*without* God in the world." They fill their lives, or strive to do, without Him who is the alone abiding fulness; and direct their conduct without reference to His authority; and habitually act from principles which He condemns; and seek after ends which are different from and inconsistent with the great ends He has put before us all. They *forget* God—live and act much as if He had not spoken, as if He were not speaking now—almost as if He had no existence. Raleigh.—To the mind of the unbeliever God can scarcely be said to exist. For him and to his apprehension there is no God. Walking amid the multitudinous traces and signatures of Divine power, wisdom, and beneficence, and receiving showers of favor from His hand every moment, the unbeliever entertains no willing thought of his Creator and preserver. J. W. A.

23. (The man) *sacrificing praise shall honor Me, and prepare a way* (that) *I may show him the salvation of God*, that of which He is the author. This phrase is used instead of *My salvation*, for the sake of a more sonorous close. The common version of the first clause makes it an identical proposition: *Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me*. At the same time it greatly weakens the expression by the use of the ambiguous term *offer*. The words are all borrowed from

vs. 14, 15, to which there is therefore a direct allusion, and by which the clause must be interpreted. It is really a promise that he whose offerings are genuine expressions of thanksgiving shall have cause or occasion to praise God for His mercies. A.—The Psalm concludes with the assertion of the same truth as v. 14. The lesson of the Psalm for all who pervert the law of God, whether to purposes of superstition or hypocrisy, is the same; God desires the heart and the will of man as the true sacrifice.

Sacrificeth thanksgiving, as above, v. 14. The verb is designedly employed in order to mark the nature of the *sacrifice* which God will have; slay not victims, bring not animals, but bring thanksgiving as sacrifices. There is no duty so commonly forgotten. God showers benefits upon us with both hands, large and free, and we receive them as a matter of course, and never consider whose love has bestowed them; and thus, in our unthankfulness, we rob God of His honor. Further, as thanksgiving is thus dwelt upon because it is so commonly forgotten, so it is also put as the sum of religion because it, in fact, includes all else. Faith, and prayer, and self-denial, and the endurance of the cross, and all holy exercises are, as Calvin observes, comprised in this one grace of thankfulness. P.—Praise is the best sacrifice; true, hearty, gracious thanksgiving from a renewed mind. The songs of redeemed men are the music which the ear of Jehovah delights in. Sacrifice your loving gratitude, and God is honored thereby. Not to ceremonies, not to unpurified lips, is the blessing promised, but to grateful hearts and holy lives. S.

When the thought that God's purpose in all His acts is His own glory, is firmly united with that other, that His purpose in all His acts is our blessing, then we begin to understand how full of joy it may be for us. His glory is sought by Him in the manifestation of His loving heart, mirrored in our illuminated and gladdened hearts. To say that God's glory is His great end is surely but another way of saying that He is love. The love that seeks to bless us desires, as all love does, that it should be known for what it is, that it should be recognized in our glad hearts, and smiled back again from our brightened faces. God desires that we should know Him, and so have eternal life; He desires that knowing Him, we should love Him, and loving should praise, and so should glorify Him. He desires that there should be an interchange of love bestowing and love receiving, of gifts showered down, of praise ascending, of fire falling from the heavens, and

sweet incense, from grateful hearts, going up in fragrant clouds acceptable unto God. It is a sign of a Fatherly heart that He "*seeketh*" such to worship Him." He will be glorified by our praise, because He loves us so much. He commences with an offer, He advances to a command. He gives first, and then (not till then) He comes seeking fruit of the "trees" which are "the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified." First, He showers down blessings; then looks for a revenue of praise! A. M.

Ordereth his conversation aright.

The word "conversation" here must be carefully taken in its ancient, not its modern sense—in the sense of one's entire life, not by any means of one's speech only. The original has no specific reference to speech, though obviously it must include words along with deeds. The specifications of the Psalm include slander and sins of the tongue, but by no means exclude all other sins. The demand is that men be honestly, conscientiously careful to obey God's entire law, and shape their whole life into harmony with His revealed will. So doing they shall richly experience His salvation. C.—Though the main work of religion lies within, yet "our light must so shine" that others may behold it; the foundation of sincerity is in the heart, and sincerity is a holy leaven, which if it be in the *heart* will work itself into the life, and make it swell and rise as high as heaven. T. Watson.

You glorify God when you are fruitful in holiness and obedience. "Herein is My Father glorified," says our Lord, "that ye bear much fruit." You ought to live and walk so as you may in a sort express the glorious perfections of God in your conversation, and that the image of God may be seen stamped on your very lives. Your lives should be a constant hymn to the glory and praise of God, by proclaiming to the world a deep sense of the omniscience, infinite justice, and holiness of that God whom you profess to serve. And you should walk so as others may be induced to glorify God: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, who is in heaven." *Wisheart*.—The Spirit of God does what He does in us through our own agency and with our own consciousness. This is the principal drift of the direction, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who (thus) worketh in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure." G. Bowen.

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This Psalm is remarkable for other things

besides its lyric grandeur and dramatic vivacity, and its foregleams of the great white throne and the last assize. It is as spiritual and heart-searching as anything in the Gospels or epistles, and it brings out in a most satisfying way the inner side of the Old Testament religion. This it does without reflecting upon other portions of the Hebrew revelation or introducing a fatal discord between priests and prophets. *Chambers.*

The instruction of the Psalm abides ; it has not lost its force. The sacraments and ordi-

nances of the Christian Church may become to us what sacrifice and offering were to the Jews, a mere *opus operatum* ; a man may give all his goods to feed the poor, and yet have no love ; a man may be punctual in his attendance at all holy ordinances, and yet cherish iniquity in his heart, and, upon occasion, secretly practise it. Hence the Psalm is truly prophetic—that is, universal in its character. It deals with “the sinners and the hypocrites in Zion,” but it reaches to all men, in all places, to the end of time. P.

PSALM LI.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN. A PSALM OF DAVID : WHEN NATHAN THE PROPHET CAME UNTO HIM, AFTER HE HAD GONE IN TO BATH-SHEBA.

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| <p>1 HAVE mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness :
According to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.</p> <p>2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.</p> <p>3 For I acknowledge my transgressions :
And my sin is ever before me.</p> <p>4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned,
And done that which is evil in thy sight :
That thou mayest be justified when thou speakest,
And be clear when thou judgest.</p> <p>5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity ;
And in sin did my mother conceive me.</p> <p>6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts :
And in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.</p> <p>7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean :
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.</p> <p>8 Make me to hear joy and gladness ;
That the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.</p> <p>9 Hide thy face from my sins,
And blot out all mine iniquities.</p> <p>10 Create in me a clean heart, O God ;</p> | <p>And renew a right spirit within me</p> <p>11 Cast me not away from thy presence ,
And take not thy holy Spirit from me.</p> <p>12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation
And uphold me with a free [<i>willing</i>] spirit.</p> <p>13 Then will I teach transgressors thy ways ;
And sinners shall be converted unto thee.</p> <p>14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God,
thou God of my salvation ;
And my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.</p> <p>15 O Lord, open thou my lips ;
And my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.</p> <p>16 For thou delightest not in sacrifice ; else
would I give it :
Thou hast no pleasure in burnt offering.</p> <p>17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit :
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.</p> <p>18 Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion :
Build thou the walls of Jerusalem.</p> <p>19 Then shalt thou delight in the sacrifices of righteousness, in burnt offering and whole burnt offering :
Then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.</p> |
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THE Psalmists run with a rapid hand over the whole scale of the affections of the human spirit seeking after God. We may pass the hardest

judgment upon David ; yet the tenderest, purest, saintliest, most virgin souls—Augustine, St. Louis, Ken, Keble, Leighton—have found

nothing more suitable in life or death than words of his. Nay, it was chiefly with them that our All-Holy Lord broke the silence of Calvary. *Bishop Alexander.*

A tradition as old as Origen gives to a cluster of Psalms (6, 32, 37, 51, 102, 130, and 143) the title of Penitential, as being peculiarly expressive of sorrow for sin. But one of these far excels the rest in fulness and depth and intensity. It is the theme of the famous *Miserere*, which, as sung during Passion Week in the Sistine Chapel at Rome, is a strain of the most powerful, heart-moving pathos ever heard by mortal ear. It is the cry of a broken spirit, a bleeding heart, prostrate under a sense of the dreadful evil of sin, and every line bears the token of genuine, unaffected emotion, the exact transcript of a living experience. Nowhere else in the Old Testament or the New is there so complete an exhibition of the nature, grounds, extent, and results of the grace of repentance. The penitent confesses his sin (vs. 1-3), states its enormity (vs. 4-6), entreats forgiveness (vs. 7-9), seeks a renewed nature (vs. 10-12), expresses it in holy resolutions (vs. 13-17), and intercedes for the whole Church (vs. 18-19). *Chambers.*

This Psalm is the expression of a deep and unfeigned repentance. It is a prayer, first, for forgiveness, with a humble confession of sinful deeds springing from a sinful nature as their bitter root; and then for renewal and sanctification through the Holy Ghost; together with vows of thankfulness for God's great mercy to the sinner, and holy resolutions for the future. It is the first of a series of Psalms (51-65) which, in the second Book of the Psalter are ascribed to David, and, according to the title, was written by him after his great sin, when the words of the prophet Nathan roused his conscience from its uneasy slumber. *P.*

A whole year had elapsed between David's crime and David's penitence. It had been a year of guilty satisfaction not worth the having; of sullen hardening of heart against God and all His appeals. The thirty-second Psalm tells us how *happy* David had been during that twelve-month, of which he says, "My bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy on me." Then came Nathan with his apologue, and with that dark threatening that the sword should never depart from his house, the fulfilment of which became a well-head of sorrow to the king for the rest of his days, and gave a yet deeper poignancy of anguish to the crime of his spoiled favorite Absalom. The stern words have their effect. The frost that had bound his soul

melted all away, and he confessed his sin, and was forgiven then and there. "I have sinned against the Lord," is the confession as recorded in the historical books; and, says Nathan, "The Lord hath made to pass from thee the iniquity of thy sin." Immediately, as would appear from the narrative, that very same day, the child of Bathsheba and David was smitten with fatal disease, and died in a week. And it is *after* all these events—the threatening, the penitence, the pardon, the punishment—that he comes to God, who had so freely forgiven, and likewise so sorely smitten him, and wails out these prayers. *A. M.*

So profound a conviction of sin, so deep and unfeigned a penitence, so true a confession, a heart so tender, so contrite, a desire so fervent for renewal, a trust so humble, so filial in the forgiving love of God, are what we find nowhere else in the Old Testament, but what we might surely expect from "the man after God's own heart." This Psalm, indeed, and the thirty-second, justify the title thus given him. In them we see the true man. Great as had been his sin, it was not the sin of a hardened nature, of the merely selfish sensualist, of the despot to whom all men were but as tools to minister to his pleasures and his crimes. And, therefore, when the prophet comes to him he turns to God with a real sorrow, and God meets him, as the father in the parable meets his erring son, with a free forgiveness. *P.*—Here the broken spirit casts off its heavy load and opens itself without reserve to the re-creating influence of the Holy Spirit. Better might the Christian heart deny itself the comfort of such a Psalm as the twenty-third than part with this deep-toned *Miserere* which appeals to a still more active consciousness and voices a sorer need. *E. C. B.*

We must have a fifty-first Psalm put always within reach for time of need. For this is not the last man upon the earth that shall come thus before God. At what time have there not been many such as he, whose wretchedness might have been voiceless and despairing without such a prayer as this? Not so marvellous is the inspiration that enabled him, this royal poet, long after he had sinned and received pardon, to reproduce truly and in suitable accents his pleadings before God, as the far-seeing wisdom and grace that had brought him up into a position of great temptation to indulge every evil passion of his nature, in the almost irresponsible power of royalty, and had then withheld the grace that up to that time had strengthened his heart in honor, and purity, and truth. How

poorly furnished for us miserable sinners our Book of Prayer would have been without the Penitential Psalms! *De Witt.*

It is this truth of human feeling which makes the Psalms more than any other portion of the Old Testament the link of union between distant ages. The historical books need a rich store of knowledge before they can be a modern book of life; but the Psalms are the records of individual experience. Personal religion is the same in all ages. The depths of our humanity remain unruffled by the storms of ages which change the surface. This Psalm, written three thousand years ago, might have been written yesterday—describes the vicissitudes of spiritual life in an Englishman, as truly as in a Jew. “Not of an age, but for all time.” F. W. R. —After the lapse of thirty centuries its living words still quiver with the emotion of the broken-hearted penitent, and its wail of godly sorrow instructs while it quickens the thoughtful reader. It sees sin as no uninspired man ever saw it, and it apprehends mercy as no mere child of this world ever conceived it. *Chambers.*

This man mixes with the world's sins in such sort that we shudder. But he draws near the majesty of God and becomes softened, purified, melted. It is good to observe this, that we rightly estimate: generously of fallen humanity, moderately of highest saintship. In our best estate and in our purest moments there is a something of the devil in us which, if it could be known, would make men shrink from us. The germs of the worst crimes are in us all. In our deepest degradation there remains something sacred, undefiled, the pledge and gift of our better nature; a germ of indestructible life, like the grains of wheat among the cerements of a mummy surviving through three thousand years, which *may* be planted, and live, and grow again. F. W. R.—David had fallen into sins enough—blackest crimes. Unbelievers sneer and ask, “Is this your man after God's own heart?” The sneer seems to me but a shallow one. What are faults, what the outward detail of a life, if the inner secret of it, if the remorse, the temptations, the true often baffled, never-ended struggle of it, are to be forgotten? Of all acts is not for a man *repentance* the most Divine? The deadliest sin were that same supercilious consciousness of no sin; *that* is death. David's life and history as written for us in those Psalms of his I consider to be the truest emblem ever given of a man's moral progress and warfare here below. All earnest souls will ever discern in it the faithful struggle of an earnest human soul toward what is good and

best—struggle often baffled down as into entire wreck; yet ever with tears, repentance, true unchangeable purpose begun anew. Poor human nature! Is not a man's walking, in truth, always a succession of falls? Man can do no other. In this wild element of a life he has to struggle onward; now fallen, deep abased; and ever with tears, repentance, with bleeding heart, he has to rise again, struggle again still onward. That his struggle be a faithful, unconquerable one; *that* is the question of questions. *Carlyle.*

Happy for every man that the battle between the spirit and the flesh should begin in him again and again, as long as his flesh is not subdued to his spirit. If he be wrong, the greatest blessing which can happen to him is that he should find himself in the wrong. Whatever anguish of mind it may cost him, it is a light price to pay for the inestimable treasure which true repentance and amendment brings; the fine gold of solid self-knowledge, tried in the fire of bitter experience; the white raiment of pure and simple heart; the eye-salve of honest self-condemnation and noble shame. If he have but these—and these God will give him in answer to prayer, the prayer of a broken and contrite heart—then he will be able to carry on the battle against the corrupt flesh and its affections and lusts in hope, in the assured hope of final victory; “For greater is He that is with us than he that is against us.” He that is against us is ourself, our selfish self, our animal nature; and He that is with us is God—God and none other; and who can pluck us out of His hand! *C. Kingsley.*

A noble nature, stung before its sin and seared before its time, contending between the whirlpool of passion and the strong, still impulses of poetry and faith, ruling all spirits except *his own*, and yet forever seeking to regulate it, too, sincere in *all* things—in sin and in repentance—but sincerest in repentance—often neglecting the special precept, but ever loving the general tenor of the law, unreconciled to his age or circumstances, and yet always striving after such a reconciliation, harassed by early grief, great temptations, terrible trials in advanced life, and views necessarily dim and imperfect—David, nevertheless, retained to the last his heart, his intellect, his simplicity, his devotion—above all his sincerity—loved his God, saw from afar off his Redeemer; and let the man who is “without sin” among his detractors cast the first stone. His character is *checkered*, but the stripes outnumber the stains, and the streaks of light outnumber both. In his life there is no lurking-

place—all is plain ; the heights are mountains —“ the hills of holiness,” where a free spirit walks abroad in singing robes ; the valleys are depths, out of which you hear the voice of a prostrate penitent pleading for mercy, but nothing is, or can be, concealed, since it is God’s face which shows both the lights and shadows of the scene. David, if not the greatest or best of inspired men, was certainly one of the most extraordinary. *Gilfillan.*

It was the decidedly God-seeking and God-honoring disposition of his heart which made him the true *David*—the beloved of the Lord. It was his faith in Jehovah as the only God of heaven and earth, as the only source of salvation, happiness, and blessing. Even his sins brought out all the clearer that the key-note of his soul was a thirst after holiness, a perfect peace of the heart through union with the Holy One of Israel. This “thirsting after God” characterized him throughout his whole life.

We observe it in him from the first moment we make his acquaintance. It was because the Lord “looketh on the heart” that the young shepherd was preferred above his brethren. And no wonder. That young shepherd, when following the sheep, found his delight in tuning his harp to the praise of his God. It was not the prospect of being praised by the people, and rewarded by the king that prompted him to take up his sling against Goliath, but his burning zeal for the honor of the God of Israel, whose holy name he had heard reviled. To him God is his life’s beginning and end, the only true foundation and rock. When he breaks out into exultation it is because he knows himself near to Him, and when he pours out his heart in doleful lamentations it is because he feels that his sins have made a separation between that God and his soul. *De Liefde.*

More is to be learned of God and of our relations to Him from this single Psalm of David than from all the heathen philosophers taken together. The living God, subject to no fate, reigning with no divided empire, blotting out transgressions, inhabiting eternity, yet dwelling with the humble and contrite to revive the spirit of the humble, abiding with us when father and mother forsake, and satisfying the soul by himself alone, was not known. In the heathen philosophy, with its expositions of law and duty, there is no sure word of consolation for the dying thief, the penitent prodigal, the publican groaning under the burden of sin. There is no authorized hope that can light up the dark valley of death for a sinner. Many fine and beautiful things Augustine said he found in Plato ;

but not the words, “Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” *G. P. Fisher.*

TITLE. *To the Chief Musician. A Psalm. By David. When Nathan the Prophet came unto him, as he (i.e., David) had come unto Bathsheba.* The first inscription was particularly necessary here, to show that the Psalm was designed for permanent and public use, since it might otherwise have been regarded as expressive of mere personal emotions. It has reference to the one great crime of David’s life, noted as such in the inspired history itself (1 Kings 15 : 5), and involving the guilt of both adultery and murder. The significant repetition of the phrase *came unto* in v. 2 is lost in the English and most other versions. *As* is not a mere particle of time, simply equivalent to *when*, but suggests the ideas of analogy, proportion, and retaliation. **A.**—Assigned to “the chief musician” for perpetual use in the service of song before the congregation of Israel, it testifies that no false modesty and no indulged pride withheld him from making his confession as public as his sin had been notorious. He had sinned before the nation ; so he would have his repentance go forth before not the nation only, but the world. **C.**

1-3. David uses here and in all the Psalms which refer to his great guilt three words, which comprise all the characteristics of sin committed by an offender against God’s law, save one, that of wilful, impenitent wickedness. Our A. V. is generally careful in observing the distinction, “iniquity” (*avon*), or “perversity ;” “transgression” (*pesha*), the breach of God’s law ; “sin” (*hattath*), as a defilement. He does not use the word wickedness (*resha*), nor is it in any case imputed to a servant of God. (See Psalms 32 : 1, 2 ; 38 : 18 ; 39 : 8-11 ; 40 : 12.) *Cook.*

1. The prayer for forgiveness. **According to Thy lovingkindness.** In all godly sorrow there is hope. Sorrow without hope may be remorse or despair, but it is not repentance. Hence the true penitent always looks to the lovingkindness of God, even at the very time when he feels most deeply how he has sinned against it. The cry on his lips is, “My Father,” even when he confesses, “I am no more worthy to be called Thy son.” **P.**—**Mercy, lovingkindness.** The first word is strong ; it implies kindness, graciousness ; but the second is much stronger ; it speaks of deep, tender, parental sympathy, of an abundance and overflow of those feelings which assure the penitent child of his mother’s unalterable love, of her yearnings for his return to her bosom. *Cook.*

His whole hope rests upon God's own character, as revealed in the endless continuance of His acts of love. He knows the number and the greatness of his sins, and the very depth of his consciousness of sin helps him to a corresponding greatness in his apprehension of God's mercy. This is the blessedness of all true penitence, that the more profoundly it feels our own sore need and great sinfulness, in that very proportion does it recognize the yet greater mercy and all-sufficient grace of our loving God. And for us who have the perfect love of God perfectly expressed in His Son, that same plea is incalculably strengthened, for we can say, "According to Thy tender mercies in Thy dear Son, blot out my transgressions." A. M.

We need always to keep in mind that it is through Christ only that forgiveness is possible. God's character, as revealed by Christ, is seen to be one of holiness and love. Love says, "Forgive," but holiness, of which righteousness and justice are an integral part, says: "Evil is foreign to me; I cannot condone it or have fellowship with it." Christ is the reconciling factor that makes it possible for love to forgive without violating righteousness and justice. It does not make much difference about our theory of the Atonement if we only keep in mind that only in Christ crucified "mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." It must be remembered, too, that this promise of forgiveness is conditional. God will forgive no unrepentant man. There must be unequivocal hatred of sin. There can be no denial of the reality of sin, nor of responsibility for it, nor of the fact of sin in our case. The humiliating reality of it all must be acknowledged along with our helplessness. The old life must be left behind; our eyes must be turned heavenward, not earthward, and the aim and desire of our heart must be to live a life such as God would have us live. Only on that condition can we claim the promise. Then we feel that we are not our own, but bought with a price. Divine pardon has made us debtors to Divine favor. That debt can be quit only by making others debtor to the favor of love and service that we bestow. *Interior.*

2. Without one word or thought of self-defence or even extenuation, admitting everything, confessing all, and humbling himself low before God, he pleads for mercy—mercy simple and pure—nothing else. Yet he would add, not in the line of self-vindication, but of conscious weakness and of inexpressible longings to be kept pure henceforth and forever: "Wash

me thoroughly from mine iniquity; cleanse me from my sin." Take away from me not only the condemnation under which my guilty soul might justly sink, but the very spirit of sinning—that pollution of soul which makes sin morally possible. "Cleanse me"—that I sin no more. C.—*Wash me thoroughly.* Heb., *multiply to wash me*; by which phrase he implies the greatness of his guilt, and the insufficiency of all legal washings, and the absolute necessity of some other and better thing to wash him, even of God's grace and the blood of Christ. M. *Pool.*—Abiding sorrow for sin is quiet. It is all from God, and all of God. We love because much has been forgiven, and we always remember how much it was. We love because the softness of sorrow is akin to the filial confidence of love. David gives it a voice, "Wash me more and more, O Lord;" and the whole Church throughout the world has adopted his *Miserere*, and is continually crying, "Wash me more and more." Anon.

My sin. In all the petitions we see that the idea of his own single responsibility for the whole thing is uppermost in David's mind. It is *my* transgression, it is *mine* iniquity, and *my* sin. He has not learned to say with Adam of old, and with some to-day: "I was tempted, and I could not help it." A. M.—It is sin as sin, not its punishment here nor hereafter, not simply any of its evil consequences; but sin *against God*, the daring impiety of *my* breaking the good and holy law of this living, loving God. *Thomas Alexander.*

3. I acknowledge my transgressions. Whilst he would not consider confession as giving a claim to the favor of God, he knew it was a condition of forgiveness. He who does not confess his sins with a broken, penitent, contrite heart has no reason to hope for absolution. It is sin, not its consequences that he deplors. Sin is the abominable thing. D. *Thomas.*—**My sin is ever before me.** A man's sins must come before him at some time or other; and whenever they do come before him, it is a very solemn time. To some, by God's grace, that meeting comes in mid-life; to some on a deathbed; to some, for the first time, as far as their consent goes, in another world. J. V.

4. To Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done the evil in Thine eyes, to the intent that Thou mayest be just in Thy speaking, and be clear in Thy judging. The particle at the beginning denotes general relation, *as to*, or *respecting*. It does not therefore directly and explicitly substitute God for man as the injured

party, which is the only sense that can be put upon the English phrase *against Thee*. This idea, however, is undoubtedly implied, as well as perfectly consistent with the usage of the Scriptures in describing all sin as committed against God. Even murder, the highest crime that can be committed against man, is condemned and punished as the violation of God's image (Gen. 9 : 6). A.

The words are to be explained by David's *deep conviction of sin as sin*. Face to face with God, he sees nothing else, can think of nothing else, but His presence forgotten, His holiness outraged, His love scorned. Therefore he must confess and be forgiven by God before he could even think of the wrong done to his neighbor. But, secondly, this deep feeling of the penitent heart, of the heart which loves God above all things, has its root in the very relation in which God stands to His creatures. All sin, *as sin*, is and must be against God. All wrong done to our neighbor is wrong done to one created in the image of God ; all tempting of our neighbor to evil is taking the part of Satan against God, and, so far as in us lies, defeating God's good purpose of grace toward him. All wounding of another, whether in person or property, in body or soul, is a sin against the goodness of God. In like manner, all love to our neighbor is love to God, whom we love in Him. On this principle we shall be judged : " Inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these, ye have done it unto Me." It is not, therefore, enough to explain these words of David, " Against Thee only," by saying that they are the expression of his *own deep sense* of his guilt and the dishonor done to God. That feeling rested upon the eternal truth of which it was the expression—a truth on which, as Hengstenberg observes, the Decalogue itself is based : " Thou must honor and love God in Himself, in those who represent Him on earth (Deut. 5 : 12), in all who bear His image (vs. 13, 14). Earlier still, in Gen. 9 : 6, the punishment of murder is grounded on this, that man bears God's image." " How must David have trembled," says the same commentator. " how must he have been seized with shame and grief, when he referred everything to God, when in Uriah he saw only the image of God, the Holy One, who deeply resented that injury—the gracious and compassionate One, to whom he owed such infinitely rich benefits, who had lifted him up from the dust of humiliation, had so often delivered him, and had also given him the promise of so glorious a future !" P.

Against thee, thee only. The word

" only" is striking, considering how David had cruelly injured his fellow-men, and the terrible results of his guilt ; but sin, as such, is directed primarily against God. His law is broken, His name dishonored, and the special heinousness even of such offences as that of David consists in their antagonism to God's will. At the same time the Hebrew idiom must be remembered, which represents secondary and subordinate objects as absolutely nothing compared with the first and highest. Whatever guilt David might have contracted toward man, in the mind of a true Israelite it was absolutely nothing compared with his sin against God. *Cook*.—Our first parent Adam might justly have said to God : " *Against Thee only have I sinned*," who never sinned against any other ; but for David to say it, who had committed two notorious sins against his neighbor and faithful friend Uriah, what unfitter speech could possibly be devised ? These actions of David were great wrongs indeed, and enormous iniquities against Uriah ; but can we properly say they were *sins* against Uriah ? For what is sin but a transgression of God's law ? And how then can sin be committed against any but against Him only whose law we transgress ? *R. Laker*.

True penitence is not a dead knowledge of committed sin, but a vivid consciousness of it, as a source of restlessness and anguish ; and although this penitential sorrow is not a merit which earns grace, it is nevertheless the condition without which no bestowal of grace is possible. Such true recognition of sin regards all sin directly as sin against God, and in the last analysis as sin against Him alone ; for all the relationships in which man stands to men are only forms in which is manifested his fundamental relationship to God ; and sin is " that which is evil in God's sight ;" it is a contradiction of the will of God, the sole most high Law-giver and Judge. So the case stands, as David confesses, with his sin. D.

The core and essence of the criminality in every case, even in transgressions of the second table of the Law, lies in this, that they are offences against God ; this the penitent offender recognizes, *That Thou mightest be right in Thy speaking, mightest be pure in Thy judging*. God suffered him in His holy providence to go on unchecked, involving himself in one sin after another, revealing the depravity of his heart in open acts to such an extent that he was stripped of every excuse and subterfuge, and was himself obliged to own the justice of the fearful sentence pronounced upon him by the mouth of Nathan, and of any infliction with which God

should see fit to visit him hereafter. This passage is quoted in Romans 3 : 4, in evidence of God's unimpeachable rectitude. W. H. G.

To make David say, I have sinned against thee, O God, *to the end* that, or *in order* that, thou mayest be justified in condemning me, is to miss his meaning egregiously. But that he should say, I make this fullest possible confession of my sins as specially *against Thee*, so that thou mayest be vindicated in the severest inflictions upon me therefor, is german to his state of feeling, is in itself intrinsically right, and is therefore to be accepted as his meaning. C.

—That God may stand justified when He decisively speaketh and judgeth, that He, the Judge, may carry His point in opposition to all human judging—this is the ultimate issue of David's confession of sin and of the whole history of humanity, and more especially of Israel. D.—This recognition of God's righteousness is the first and most certain proof that a man is in a true position and is capable of justification. Justify God by admitting that man has no hope whatever but in His free forgiveness, that nothing is due to man but punishment, and He will justify man by taking away the imputation of sin. Cook.

God sees sin not in its consequences but in itself; a thing infinitely evil, even if the consequences were happiness to the guilty instead of misery. So sorrow, according to God, is to see sin as God sees it. The grief of Peter was as bitter as that of Judas. He went out and wept bitterly; how bitterly none can tell but they who have learned to look on sin as God does. But in Peter's grief there was an element of hope; and that sprung precisely from this—that he saw God in it all. Despair of self did not lead to despair of God. [Thus was it with David.] F. W. R.

Paul, near the close of life, spoke of himself as the chief of *sinners*. He was not so much comparing himself with his fellow men as noting his relation to God and His Christ. The expression conveys, without extravagance or exaggeration, the literal truth in regard to Paul *as he saw himself* under the illumination of the Divine Spirit. It is no question between man and man, or concerning degrees of criminality, but between the soul and infinite holiness. And when the light of infinite purity has flooded the inmost life, when every secret chamber of the soul, with its actual guilt and its horrible possibilities of sin is laid open to view, each may adopt the language as his own—"sinners, of whom I am chief." C. W. Miller.—Every believer who has attained a right knowledge of

himself will acknowledge, with blessed Bradford the martyr, that "the seeds of every sin that ever was or can be committed are in his own heart and nature." This knowledge affords the Christian great cause of humility. But it affords him greater still, that the Lord hath loved him in his state of rebellion and apostasy; yea, hath washed him so pure in the blood of His Son that the moral law itself can find no speck of sin upon him; and that by the power of the Holy Ghost he chooses God for his portion. Hill.

Into true penitence the idea of punishment never enters. If it did it would be almost a relief; but oh! those moments in which a selfish act has appeared more hideous than any pain which the fancy of a Dante could devise! when the idea of the strife of self-will in battle with the loving will of God prolonged forever has painted itself to the imagination as the real infinite hell! when self-concentration and the extinction of love in the soul has been felt as the real damnation of the devil-nature! F. W. R.

5. Sin is now regarded in its source. From my very earliest being sin has been with me. Sinfulness consists not merely in so many several sinful acts, but in a sinful and corrupt nature. The depth of the abyss of sin is here opened before the eyes of the penitent with a distinctness of which the instances are comparatively few in the Old Testament. (Compare, however, Job 14 : 4; Gen. 8 : 21.) Manifestly not in extenuation, but in aggravation of his sin does David thus speak. "He lays on himself the blame of a tainted nature, instead of that of a single fault; not a murder only, but of a murderous nature. 'Conceived in sin.' From first moments up till then, he saw sin—sin—sin; nothing but sin."—(Robertson.) Luther says: "If a man will speak and teach aright of sin, he must consider it in its depth, and show from what *root* it and all that is godless springs, and not apply the term merely to sins that have been committed. For from this error, that men know not and understand not what sin is, arises the other error that they know not nor understand what grace is. . . . According to this Psalm, then, we must say that all is sin which is born of father and mother, and from so evil a root nothing good can grow before God." And Stier says: "Men may say what they will, the doctrine of original sin is contained in this passage;" and so it is precisely in that sense in which alone it is true—that sinfulness is innate, that corrupt parents can only have corrupt children. P.

David thinks of himself as of a sinning race, born of sinning parents, born with the antece-

dent temptations and occasions of sin (not the efficient and necessitating causes) existing in himself, and consequently under circumstances which induced sin at the earliest moment possible. This fact is pertinent here, not as an extenuation of his guilt, but as suggesting his own moral frailty, his danger of falling again before temptation's power, and his pressing need—a want that seemed almost crushing—of most thorough moral cleansing and of most effective moral succor from God's Spirit that he may stand henceforth in purity. In this view of it his meaning is fully in harmony with the words that immediately follow, as we shall see. In this construction the passage classes itself with Job 31 : 18, and Psalm 58 : 3, as evincing a special Hebrew idiom or proverbial expression in the sense of doing a thing from the earliest practicable moment. Job said : “From my youth the fatherless was brought up with me as with a father, and I have guided her *from my mother's womb* ;” the Psalmist : “The wicked are estranged from the womb ; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.” C.

6. Behold! Lo, on one hand I have seen sin as I never saw it before ! on the other, lo, I have learnt that truth is what Thou desirest in the secret heart ! P.—*Truth in the reins* signifies the firm establishment and rule of truth and right in a man's deepest and most inward experiences and emotions, in his most secret life, the life of his conscience and heart. D.

“In the inward parts,” “in the hidden part,” are expressions precisely equivalent to our usage of the word *heart*. God seeks an honest, pure, truthful heart. Behold, his approving eye is only upon true sincerity ! He abhors all hypocrisy. The sincerely honest heart he will teach true wisdom. This verse, therefore, gives us God's standard of holiness, His ideas of what it really is. Consequently, the opposite of this is *sin*. C.—Reality, sincerity, true holiness, heart fidelity, these are the demands of God. He cares not for the pretence of purity ; He looks to the mind, heart, and soul. Always has the Holy One of Israel estimated men by their inner nature, and not by their outward professions ; to Him the inward is as visible as the outward, and He rightly judges that the essential character of an action lies in the motive of him who works it. S.

Obedience must be sincere. An action may look like a friendly act when there is nothing of friendship and good-will in the heart. Every precept requires not only an outward but an inward conformity, not only a bodily action but a spiritual frame. God would not have the skin

of a sacrifice without the flesh, nor the carcass of obedience without truth in the inward parts. *Charnock*.—There are at least three forms of conspiracy against truth observable in human character : hypocrisy, “cant,” insincerity. Truth of heart is that heavenly principle whereby each soul is guided to a blessed result, under the action of the law of life in subjection to which we prepare to meet our Redeemer and our Judge. God is truth, and God is reigning. They who “*will to do His will shall know*.” Seek above all to be true, for truth is the first condition of a soul's perfection. *J. Knox Little*.

In the hidden part shalt make me to know wisdom. The inward and hidden parts are mentioned as opposed to the mere outside. *Wisdom*, Divine illumination, without which no correct view either of sin or holiness is possible. *Thou wilt make me know*, involves a prayer, although in form it is an expression of strong confidence. A.—“Truth in the *inward parts*” shall be rewarded with “wisdom in the *hidden part*.” The more your knowledge of what is right is carried out into action, the more shall that knowledge be increased. It is like what Peter says : “Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge.” Diligently practice all that you scripturally believe to be right, and your knowledge of what is right shall increase. *Anon*.

7. Purge me (literally, *Thou wilt purge me*). The language, not merely of prayer, but of confident expectation. The word is used of purgation by expiatory sacrifice or by purifying rites. It is not employed of the removal of the lighter kinds of defilement, for which the law prescribed simply bathing in clean water, but as in the case of leprosy (Lev. 14 : 49, 52, where the same word is rendered *cleanse*). To this also the *hyssop* points, which, as the symbol and the appointed means of purgation, was used in the same service. W. H. G.—The Hebrew words for “purge” and for “hyssop” come from the sacrificial system, and indicate that moral cleansing from sin of which those sacrifices and rites were typical. “Purge” means, take sin out of me ; set me free from its presence and power. C.

Here is majesty in misery ; a king in penitence ; a monarch of the earth at the footstool of mercy. David, as a miserable sinner, polluted with the complicated crimes of adultery and murder, is here ascribing honor to the blood of the Lamb by pleading of faith. True faith manifests itself in the heart, by its turning away from every other ground of deliverance, and turning to that blessed fountain opened for sin

and uncleanness. Not my tears of repentance, but Thy precious blood, O Lamb of God, can wash me. Precious word ! *W. Mason.*—It is not the language of one who felt himself to be a castaway. It is anything else than the language of despair ; it is that of a child who knows that he is still beloved, although he has grievously offended. He expresses no dread of utter and final condemnation ; but his cry is that of a wanderer who longs to get back ; a captive who cries for deliverance. He sees and feels his guilt, and prays, “Purge me, and I shall be clean ; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” *J. Copley.*

While there is but one Sacrifice, there are many sprinklings. As long as we live, and every day that we live, our rising evils of heart and life are such as would destroy all peace, if it were not for the hyssop-branch in the hand of the Spirit. There is a twofold application to the soul of Christ's atoning righteousness by the Holy Spirit ; one, which is single, and never repeated, the effect of which is *to interest such soul in the redemptive acts* ; the other, which is perpetually renewed, the effect of which is *to give peace* to the soul under a sense of pardon. That experience may justly be distrusted in which there is no going again and again to the blood of Jesus for new applications. Thousands have used the words of the great penitential Psalm with a feeling of their necessity. The royal sinner knew that he had received the Holy Spirit, for he prays that he may not lose the gift. He knew that he had possessed the joy of God's salvation, for he implores that it may be restored. But at the same time he sues for fresh pardons : “Blot out my transgressions ;” “Purge me with hyssop ;” and for new peace of conscience, “Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.” The Divine affusion of the sacred blood upon the heart and conscience, tends, as the Christian life goes on, to make the subject a more obedient and a happier Christian. *J. W. A.*

The “mystery of the blood” David may not have fathomed. What Old Testament writer has clearly done so, if we except Isaiah (chap. 53) ? But could he have reached a higher level of revelation or of experience than he has done in this petition, “Un-sin (Thou) me with hyssop and I shall be clean : Wash (Thou) me and I shall be whiter than snow.” He sees in the rite only a symbol, it is true, and not a type. But the rite he does not fail to see, or the essential thing about it whether as symbol or type, that it is to the Priest-King Jehovah, to whom

he must look for pardon, and that to him he will not look in vain. In this circumstance, after all, we find the culmination of biblical teaching, both of the old covenant and the new. *E. C. B.*

8. Thou shalt make me to hear. Not said with reference to God's announcement of forgiveness by the Prophet Nathan, or as made in His Word, but rather with reference to those public festivals in which the whole congregation would unite in praising God, and in which David hoped now, as a forgiven sinner, to take his own part. He would be one of those who, with a heart full of thankfulness, would openly testify that thankfulness. *P.*

The emphatic figure, *crushed* or *broken*, expresses, in a very lively manner, the disorder and distress produced by consciousness of aggravated and unexpiated guilt. The change from this condition to a sense of safety and reconciliation with God, is not too strongly represented by the bold but most expressive figure of broken bones rejoicing. *A.*—The bones ; not merely instead of the heart, but as constituting the strength and framework of the body ; the crushing of the bones being a very strong figure, denoting the most complete prostration, mental and bodily. *P.*

9. The two clauses of this verse are essentially parallel, both giving the idea of true forgiveness, which is that of *overlooking* sin, regarding it no longer as demanding punishment, but passing it over, “remembering it no more.” It amounts therefore to the same thing whether the Lord hides His face from sin or blots the sin out ; in either case He is thought of as putting the sin away from His mind's eye and looking upon the sinner in a sense as if he had not sinned. For this the penitent soul of David longed exceedingly, for it seemed to him unendurable that God should hold his sin continually before the eye as if too bad to be forgiven. *C.*—What he longs for is that God would hide His face from the sin which He is now punishing in him, so that it be, as it were, no more existent for Him ; that He would wipe out all his iniquities, so that they should no more bear witness against him. *D.*—Beginning with the first Psalm and going straight through till we come to the end of the collection, there is nowhere any lack of evidence that in the Psalmist's mind there is nothing that God loathes like sin, and that to be a friend of God and enjoy His favor he, too, must loathe it and put it away. *E. C. B.*

10. The prayer for justification is followed by the prayer for renewal. A clean heart is a heart undisturbed by sin and the consciousness

of sin ; a steadfast spirit is a spirit assured of its standing in grace and well-grounded therein. David's prayer is for that very thing which is promised by the prophets as a future deed of salvation to be wrought by God the Redeemer upon His people (Jer. 24 : 7 ; Ezek. 11 : 19 ; 36 : 26). D.—*A pure heart create for me (oh) God, and a fixed (or settled) spirit renew within me.* The petition in the first clause involves a confession of impurity, and of dependence on almighty power and sovereign grace for its removal. A pure heart is a familiar scriptural figure for affections free from the taint of sin. A.—The creation of a pure heart, free from the taint and consciousness of sin, is altogether an evangelical doctrine, prefigured in old symbolical rites, but first anticipated by the yearnings of a soul smitten to death by sin.

Renew a right spirit. A steadfast spirit, one not disquieted by fears or doubts, a mind stayed on the Lord, and therefore kept in perfect peace. Cook.—The thing David prayed for was precisely a spirit, a mind, fixed, settled, established in piety. This is the sense of the Hebrew word for "right"—"a right spirit." David prayed to be kept steadfast in obedience, as opposed to a fickle, changeable mind, easily seduced into sin by temptation. C.

Create in me a clean heart, O God. This "creation" is from nothing. David uses the same word of our creation which Moses uses of "the creation of the heaven and the earth." Our creation "in Jesus Christ" is no mere strengthening of our powers, no mere aiding of our natural weakness by the might of the grace of God ; it is not a mere amendment, improvement of our moral habits ; it is a creation out of nothing, of that which we had not before. There was nothing in us whereof to make it. We were decayed, corrupt, dead in trespasses and sins. What is dead becometh not alive except by the infusion of what it had not. What is corrupt receiveth not soundness save by passing away itself and being replaced by a new production. "The old man" passeth not into the new man, but is "put off." It is not the basis of the new life, but a hindrance to it. It must be "put off" and the new man "put on," "created in Christ Jesus." Pusey.—Nothing under a thorough change will suffice ; neither tears nor trouble of mind, neither good desires nor intentions, nor yet the relinquishment of some sins, nor the performance of some good works, will avail anything, but a new "creature," a word that comprehends more in it than words can well express ; and perhaps after all that can be said of it, never thoroughly

to be understood by what a man hears from others, but by what he must feel within himself. South.

He that can in truth say, with David, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew within me a right spirit," hath the beginnings of eternal life. He that laments the disorders of his heart and inward thoughts, and wishes and strives to be delivered from them, hath the sparks of Divine love, and the tokens of Divine grace ; for there can be no such thing as preparation for heaven with an allowed indulgence of sin. It is in being "perfect in holiness," unblamable in holiness, that this meetness consists ; for the preparation must be of the same sort with the final condition ; the change must be of the same nature as that in which the character is perfected. R. Hall.

The Bible notion of what men need in order to be pure and good is very different from the superficial notions of worldly moralists and philanthropists. We hear a great deal about "culture," as if all that were needed were the training and strengthening of the nature, as if what was mainly needed was the development of the understanding. We hear about "reformation" from some who look rather deeper than the superficial apostles of culture. And how singularly the very word proclaims the insufficiency of the remedy which it suggests ! "Re-formation" affects form and not substance. It puts the old materials into a new shape. Exactly so—and much good may be expected from that ! They are the old materials still, and it matters comparatively little how they are arranged. It is not re-formation but re-innovation, or to go deeper still re-generation that the world needs ; not new forms but a new life ; not the culture and development of what it has in itself, but extirpation of the old by the infusion of something new and pure that has no taint of corruption, nor any contact with evil. "Verily, I say unto you, ye must be born again." All slighter notions of the need and more superficial diagnosis of the disease lead to a treatment with palliatives which never touch the true seat of the mischief. A. M.

II. "Take not (again) Thy Holy Spirit from me." The petition expresses the holy fear of the man who has his eyes open to the depth and iniquity of sin, lest at any moment he should be left without the succor of that Divine Spirit who was the only source in him of every good thought, of every earnest desire, of every constant resolution. It is the cry of one who knows, as he never knew before, the weakness of his own nature, and the strength of tempta-

tion, and the need of Divine help ; and to whom therefore nothing seems so dreadful as that God should withdraw His Spirit. P.—The manifestations of God's presence are essentially the same as the expressions of His favor and love. Hence David prays here that God would not repel him away from his kind regard because of his great sin. Let me still live before Thee, still walk in Thy light, believe in and enjoy Thy love. The New Testament doctrine, that the Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of each saint, as God of old dwelt in His earthly temple, appears here in its full development. David prayed that God would not take this Divine presence from his soul, but let it return rather and abide in all its power. C.—The acts of breathing which I performed yesterday will not keep me alive to-day ; I must continue to breathe afresh every moment, or animal life ceases. In like manner, yesterday's grace and spiritual strength must be renewed, and the Holy Spirit must continue to breathe on my soul, from moment to moment, in order to my enjoying the consolations, and to my working the works of God. *Toplady.*

There is nothing shadowy or mystical in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and in the resultant spirituality of life. It is an intelligent and intelligible state, conscious and voluntary. It is the worship of God in spirit and truth, the converse with God which is the natural and habitual outcome of a clear knowledge of what God is and of what you are, the conscious and mutual exchange of thought between an erring, needy, penitent child and its holy, loving Father, who is in heaven. In or out of the Church, that is spirituality, the fixed habit of dealing with invisible and eternal realities. To be filled with the Spirit is simply to be under the dominance of those convictions which give reality to God and the soul, as the two sole factors by which the universe is constituted, and by which time and eternity are shaped. For when the heavens and the earth pass away, God remains and the soul abides. The reason and the will are the sphere of the Divine impact and indwelling ; these are not mystical but dynamic, and they are dynamic by illumination of the understanding and by securing voluntary obedience to the revelation. To be filled with the Spirit is the same thing as being guided by the Spirit into all truth ; it is to see things as they really are, and to act in accordance with that vision. Spirituality, therefore, is a rational and voluntary state. It begins with mental sanity, piercing through all shams and deceptive appearances, to God as the Holy Father, and to

man as His lost and wandering child. It is easy enough to repeat these phrases, but they are not real perceptions unless they become the fixed and habitual temper of your whole mental and moral life, the standard of universal rational judgment and the living law of obedience. With every advance in the clearness of your apprehension of what God is and what man is, there must come the prompt and voluntary practical response. You must live as you think ; you must be obedient to the heavenly vision ; for God and the soul, fatherhood and sonship, are not figures of speech, the empty generalizations of the speculative understanding, but the only eternal realities in a universe of change. . . . The nature of man is rational, ethical, spiritual. Considered as *rational*, the quest of the soul is *Truth*. Its watchword is *Reality*. Considered as *ethical*, the soul fixes attention upon a peculiar quality with which truth is invested, giving to it the force of an *imperative*, demanding personal conformity and enforcing universal self-judgment. Its watchword is *Obligation*. Considered as *spiritual*, the soul fixes attention upon *God* as the eternal fountain of Truth, and the creative source of Moral Law, *Himself* the uncreated and sovereign Reality and Imperative. *Behrends.*

12. In the midst of these abased confessions and cries for pardon there comes with wonderful force and beauty the bold prayer for restoration to "joy and gladness"—an indication surely of more than ordinary confidence in the full mercy of God, which would efface all the consequences of his sin. As before he had ventured to ask for the joy of forgiveness, so now he pleads once more for "the joy of Thy salvation," which comes from cleansing, from conscious fellowship—which he had so long and deeply felt, which for so many months had been hid from him by the mists of his own sin. The Psalmist's buoyancy, the gladness which was an inseparable part of his religion, and had rung from his harp in many an hour of peril, the bold width of his desires, grounded on the clear breadth of his faith in God's perfect forgiveness, are all expressed in such a prayer from such lips at such a time, and may well be pondered and imitated by us. A. M.

Uphold me with a free spirit. It is indeed a prayer for God's gracious help ; but his precise meaning is, Uphold me by quickening in me a willing, obedient, loving, and spontaneously acting spirit, *i.e.*, help me, O Lord, to do right with all my heart and soul, with the most spontaneous outgoing of my soul's aspirations and endeavors. That is, he is here indi-

cating *what* he wanted, rather than the agency by which he hoped to get it. C.—*A willing spirit* is one that obeys the Divine law, not by constraint, nor for the sake of reward, nor from fear of punishment, but spontaneously. His will, in all its impulses and inclinations, is in harmony with the will of God. *De Witt.*

What a prayer these clauses contain to be offered by one who has so sinned! What a marvellous faith in God's pardoning love, and what a boldness of hope in his own future they disclose! They set forth a profound ideal of a noble character; they make of that ideal a prayer; they are the prayer of a great transgressor, who is also a true penitent. In all these aspects they are very remarkable, and lead to valuable lessons. A. M.

13. Then will I teach. The Hebrew implies a longing I would fain teach transgressors Thy ways, those who, like me, have committed heinous sins. Such a desire is one of the surest signs of spiritual repentance. *Cook.*—David fulfilled his own longing and desire by embodying this Psalm, and so making *public* his own sin and shame and sorrow, in the Praise-Book of Israel and of the world. B.

13. With a conscience set free from guilt, with a heart renewed by the Spirit of God, and full of thankfulness for God's great mercy, he cannot keep silent, but will seek to turn other sinners to God. Terrible had been the fruit of his sin, not only in the wasting of his own soul, but in the injury done to others. Terrible was his punishment in witnessing this; and therefore the more anxious is he, though he cannot undo his own sin, to heal the breach, and repair the evil of sin in other souls. P.—By this Psalm David is, and will be to the world's end, teaching transgressors, telling them what God had done for his soul. H.

15. Open my lips. His lips had been sealed by sin, but God by His free forgiveness would give him fresh cause of rejoicing, and so would open them. Calvin compares 40:4, where the Psalmist says that God had put a new song in his mouth. David thus prays God to be gracious, that he may be the loud herald of that grace to others.

16. For, as expressing the reason why he will offer to God the *spiritual* offering of thanksgiving, a grateful heart and grateful lips. P.—If the sacrifice of animals even by the thousand could have washed away his guilt, or in any way appropriately met his case and the demands of infinite justice, how gladly would he have made the offering! But God had taught him better. C.—They did not confer

or convey *the remission of sins*. They were external, and their efficacy was external. How far the Jewish believer saw into the typical meaning of his sacrifices is a question which cannot now be answered. But the typical meaning and the real efficacy are two very different things. In truth, as has been truly argued, if we assign to the type the virtue of the antitype, if we make the remission of sins procured by the one coextensive with the remission of sins procured by the other, we destroy the type altogether. The sacrifice had no moral value. Hence the Psalmist says, "*not sacrifice, but a broken heart.*"

17. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. When speaking of *thankfulness*, we might have expected him to say, "*a joyful heart, or a thankful heart,*" but instead of that he says, "*a contrite heart.*" For the joy of forgiveness does not banish sorrow and contrition for sin; this will still continue. And the deeper the sense of sin, and the truer the sorrow for it, the more heartfelt also will be the thankfulness for pardon and reconciliation. The tender, humble, broken heart is therefore the best thank-offering. P.—Though other things may be the worse for breaking, yet a heart is never at the best till it be broken; for till it be broken we cannot see what is in it; till it be broken it cannot send forth its sweetest odor; and, therefore, though God loves a whole heart in affection, yet He loves a broken heart in sacrifice. And no marvel, seeing it is He Himself that breaks it. Therefore, accept, O God, my broken heart, which I offer Thee with a whole heart; seeing Thou canst neither except against that for being whole which is broken in sacrifice, nor except against that for being broken which is whole in affection. *R. Baker.*—A heart renewed—a loving heart—a penitent and humble heart—a heart broken and contrite, purified by love—that and only that is the rest of man. Spotlessness may do for angels, repentance unto life is the highest that belongs to man. F. W. R.

18, 19. These verses are not only appropriate but necessary as a conclusion to the Psalm, and every difficulty is removed by giving them their natural but figurative meaning, as an expression of desire and hope that God would favor His own people and graciously accept their service. A.—It is refreshing to see David's heart return to its former love for Zion and to prayer in her behalf, with a just sense of his royal responsibilities. Doubtless he felt that his sins had brought great scandal on the name of Israel's God, and spiritual danger upon

the Zion he had once loved and labored for. But now with a broken heart and a sense of pardon from God and of His restored favor, it was most pertinent that his prayer should revert again to those great interests of national worship and national piety which he, alas ! had done so much to imperil. Will he not give his spared life and his restored soul afresh to the care of the Lord's people, and to prayerful sympathy for Jerusalem, the city of his God ? God smiling again upon his Zion as well as upon his own long burdened and guilty soul, there shall be within her sacred walls yet many other acceptable offerings and sacrifices to the honor of Israel's God and for the good of His worshipping people. It impresses us as one of the masterly compensations wrought out in God's wisdom that so many thousand hearts have prayed and sought mercy of God in the use of these fitting words, and have been lifted out of the depths of despair into peaceful hope by the inspiring power of this Psalm and of this case of forgiving, restoring mercy. C.

Modern blasphemy delights to blacken "the man after God's own heart." His *was* a terrible fall, terrible as well as piteous. He, so blameless in youth—could he, when life had begun to set, be stained so miserably through the passions of youth ? It is an intense mystery of sin that man should admit so black a spot where all around was so fair ; it is an intenser mystery of God's love that He should have arrested so black a spot from spreading and overcasting and infecting the whole. In one way the sin was irremediable. It changed David's eternal condition. David, like the blest robber, the first-fruits of the redeeming blood of Jesus, is, through those same merits, glorious with the indwelling glory of God ; yet his soul, doubtless one of the highest of much-forgiven penitents, is still a soul which by two insulated acts broke to the uttermost God's most sacred laws of purity and of love.

How then was he restored ? Grace had been sinned away. He was left to his natural self. He had still that strong sense of justice and hatred of the very sins by which he had fallen, which responded so quickly and so indignantly against cruelty and wrong when called out by Nathan's parable. He must have had remorse. Remorse is the fruit of the most condescending love of our God. Neglected or stifled, it is the last grace by which God would save the soul ; it is the first by which God would prepare the soul which has forfeited grace to return to Him.

But remorse, although a first step to repentance, is not repentance. For remorse centres in a man's self. While it is mere remorse it does not turn to God. And so God, in His love, sent to David the prophet, the very sight of whom might recall to him the mercies of God in the past, His promises for the future, and the memory of those days of innocent service and bright aspirations to which the soul overtaken by sin looks back with such sorrowful yearning. The heavy stone which lay on the choked, dead heart was rolled away ; the dead was alive again ; the two-edged sword of God's Word, judgment, and mercy had slain him to himself that he might live to God. The awakened soul burst forth in those two words, "I have sinned against the Lord." Then was remorse absorbed, transformed, spiritualized into penitent love. But this was the beginning of the renewed life of the soul, not the end. It issued in a constant longing for a re-creation, a reverent fear springing from the sense of what it had deserved, an earnest craving for a more thorough cleansing from every stain or spot of sin, a thirst for the purging by the atoning blood, an unvarying sight of his forgiven sinfulness, spreading far and wide from the core of original sin, a longing to do free, noble, generous service, and all from God to God, from God's re-creating, renewing, enfreedoming, ennobling grace. *Pusey.*

Thank God we have such an example for our heartening. Lay it to heart, brethren ! You cannot believe too much in God's mercy. You cannot expect too much at His hands. He is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." No sin is so great but that, coming straight from it, a repentant sinner may hope and believe that all God's love will be lavished upon him, and the richest of God's gifts granted to his desires. Even if our transgression be aggravated by a previous life of godliness, and have given the enemies great occasion to blaspheme, as David did, yet David's penitence may in our souls lead on to David's hope, and the answer will not fail us. Let no sin, however dark, however repeated, drive us to despair of ourselves, because it hides from us our loving Saviour. Though beaten back again and again by the surge of our passions and sins, like some poor shipwrecked sailor, sucked back with every retreating wave and tossed about in the angry surf, yet keep your face toward the beach where there is safety ; and you will struggle through it all, and, though it were but on some floating boards and broken pieces of the ship, will come safe to land. He will uphold

you with His Spirit, and take away the weight of sin that would sink you, by His forgiving mercy, and bring you out of all the weltering waste of waters to the solid shore. A. M.

We are not all alike temptable. There are some with sweet temper and equable disposition whom nothing disturbs. God seems to have sheltered them by their very nature from the power of evil. Then there are others whose natures seem to be open on all sides, exposed to every danger. To live truly costs them fierce struggles every day. The easily-tempted ones are they to whom Christ's sympathy and help-

fulness go out in most tender interest. He singles out the one from every circle that is most liable to fall, and makes special intercession for that one. Even the Johns, with their gentle loveliness, receive less of help from the Master than do the fiery Peters.

Our very sins, if we repent of them, will be used of God to help in the growth and upbuilding of our character. If we are Christ's true followers, even our defeats shall become blessings to us, stepping-stones on which we may climb higher. This is one of the marvels of Divine grace that it can make all things work together for good. J. R. M.

PSALM LII.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN. MASCHIL OF DAVID: WHEN DOEG THE EDMITE CAME AND TOLD SAUL, AND SAID UNTO HIM, DAVID IS COME TO THE HOUSE OF AHIMELECH.

1 WHY boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man?
The mercy of God *endureth* continually.
2 Thy tongue deviseth very wickedness;
Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.
3 Thou lovest evil more than good;
And lying rather than to speak righteousness. [Selah]
4 Thou lovest all devouring words,
O thou deceitful tongue.
5 God shall likewise destroy thee for ever,
He shall take thee up, and pluck thee out of thy tent,
And root thee out of the land of the living. [Selah]

6 The righteous also shall see *it*, and fear,
And shall laugh at him, *saying*,
7 Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength;
But trusted in the abundance of his riches,
And strengthened himself in his wickedness.
8 But as for me, I am like a green olive tree in the house of God:
I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.
9 I will give thee thanks for ever, because thou hast done it:
And I will wait on [hope in] thy name, for it is good, in the presence of thy saints.

VARIOUS attempts have been made to find some other probable occasion for this Psalm than that mentioned in the title. But they have all failed. It is connected with the dastardly act of Doeg, the keeper of Saul's asses, informing the king of Ahimelech's kind treatment of David, as related in 1 Sam. 22 : 9. It resulted in the slaughter of eighty-five priests, with many men, women, and children in a priestly city. In fact, by the command of Saul he slew these defenceless ones with his own hand, and so merited the scornful salutation, "O hero!" It is a remarkable feature of this Psalm that

God is not invoked in any part of it. The poet begins with direct address to the infamous offender, and severe arraignment and castigation, as representing the Almighty, in whose name and by the inspiration of whose Spirit he speaks. *De Witt*.

This Psalm is not a prayer or complaint addressed to God against the oppression of the wicked; it is a stern upbraiding addressed to the man who, unscrupulous in the exercise of his power, and proud of his wealth (v. 9), finds his delight in all the arts of the practised liar. It is a lofty challenge, a defiance conceived in the spirit of

David when he went forth to meet the champion of Gath. The calm courage of faith breathes in every word. There is no fear, no trembling, no doubt, as to the end which will come upon the tyrant. How vain is his boast in presence of the lovingkindness of God, which protects His people; in presence of the power of God, which uproots the oppressor! Such is briefly the purport of the Psalm. P.

1-5. In interpreting the Psalms, Christian faith receives the principle of *intensity*. It is not for nothing that the Spirit of God so stirs the spirit of these Divine singers. The words of the Psalmists are truest when we pitch their significance highest. The enemies are not personal enemies of David and the rest. The notes of victory which ever and anon tremble from the strings thrill across no earthly battlefield. *Bishop W. Alexander.*

2-4. It is remarkable that there follows, not the description of the bold, bad man, ruling all around him by brute force, and crushing others into submission at his will, but that of one who gains his evil end by means chiefly of unblushing, deliberate falsehood.

5. Now comes, in short and powerful contrast to the unscrupulous violence, deceit, and falsehood of the proud oppressor the righteous judgment of God. P.—“Thou lovest all destructive words,” words having the power to *swallow up* and destroy. God also will destroy thee, for vengeance against such wickedness is demanded of the righteous God. The verbs in Hebrew are strongly significant, thus: God will tear thee down (“destroy”) as men tear down old or worthless buildings; will seize upon thee (“take”) as men take up fire from the hearth; He will pluck thee from thy dwelling-place as a tree is torn up, and will uproot thee from the land of the living. Pause and consider! for who can withstand the mighty God! C.

Wonderful is the force of the verbs in the original, which convey to us the four ideas of *laying prostrate, dissolving as by fire, sweeping away as with a besom, and totally extirpating root and branch*, as a tree is eradicated from the spot on which it grew. If a further comment be wanted, it may be found in the history of David's enemies, and the crucifiers of the Son of David, but the passage will be fully and finally explained by the destruction of the world of the ungodly at the last day. *G. Horne.*—

When good men die, they are transplanted from the land of the living on earth, the nursery of the plants of righteousness, to that in heaven, the garden of the Lord, where they shall take root forever; but when wicked men die, they

are rooted out of the land of the living, to perish forever; as fuel to the fire of Divine wrath. This will be the portion of those that contend with God. H.

Unequivocally the Master speaks to us the words of warning. They are as much a part of His message to mankind as any words that He spoke. Whatever proportion they bear to different words, they have their fixed place. They are no more to be set aside, or passed over, or hidden, than any others. We may not be able wholly to explain them, but they are not to be explained away. “Wherever this Gospel is preached” warnings of judgment, of a real danger, of penalty for transgression, of a coming of the Son of Man which will bring with it terror to the disobedient, rejection to the unbelieving, and righteous retribution to the ungodly, must be heard. To say nothing of the fearful maledictions and woes of many other passages, and nothing of the fearful explicit disclosures of judgment in the twenty-third and twenty-fourth chapters of Matthew, ponder the parables. Of the thirty no less than thirteen turn directly on the reiterated fact of a future retribution. See the tares and the burning of them; the draw-net and the bad fish cast away; the fruitless branches of the vine in the fire; the unprofitable servant doomed to outer darkness; the wicked husbandman destroyed; the ten virgins too late shut out; the utter rejection and misery inflicted for lack of the wedding garment; the unused talent a *damnum*; the barren fig-tree blasted; the rich fool and his shrivelled soul; Dives in torment; the Pharisee bidden to look straight at the damnation of hell. What can a reader of the New Testament, who reads in his right mind, mean by saying that Christ does not seek to save men by forewarning them of the terrific consequences of their sins, “pulling them out of the” metaphorical “fire?” And this is the real and most gracious explanation of all that seems so hard. It is all to save. It is a Saviour's word and a Saviour's way. If you will let Him take His other and heavenly way, be sure He will gladly leave this way untrodden. No true father scourges his son but to receive him, and for the son's sake. It is love's altered voice, the merciful stroke of love's hand, delivered with anguish and pity unspeakable, infinitely reluctant, infinitely sad. F. D. H.

6. “*And shall laugh at him;*” or, *over him*—over the wicked man thus cast down—*they shall laugh*. Such exultation, to our modern sensibilities, seems shocking, because we can hardly conceive of it, apart from the gratification of

personal vindictiveness. But there is such a thing as a righteous hatred, as a righteous scorn. There is such a thing as a shout of righteous joy at the downfall of the tyrant and the oppressor, at the triumph of righteousness and truth over wrong and falsehood. P.—The exultation of the righteous at the just punishment of the wicked is frequently described in Holy Scripture. It is inseparable from a hearty and thorough sympathy with God's law. That punishment, which it is consistent with God's attributes to inflict, it cannot be inconsistent for His people to view with a stern and holy gratification, utterly distinct from the indulgence of personal feelings of revenge or animosity. It was impossible for David not to desire the punishment of the treacherous murderer, nor to rejoice in the certainty of retribution.

7. Here again the Psalmist goes to the root of the evil; it began with alienation from God, was promoted by love of riches, such as Saul would of course heap on his unscrupulous adherent, and attained its full development in a heart strong only in its longings for evil. *Cook.*

He trusted in the abundance of his riches, which he imagined were *laid up for many years*; nay, he thought his wickedness would help to support it; right or wrong, he would get what he could and keep what he had, and be the ruin of any one that stood in his way; and this he thought would strengthen him; they may have anything that will make conscience of nothing. But now see what it comes to; see what untempered mortar he built his house with, now that it is fallen and himself buried in the ruins of it. II.

If a staff be placed in the hand of a bent and feeble man, what more natural than that he should lean on it? Man is that impotent traveller, and wealth is the staff which offers to support his steps. Hence, in the Word of God it is repeatedly intimated that to possess riches and to trust in them is one and the same thing, except where grace makes the distinction. The term *mammon*, according to its derivation, imports *what ever men are apt to confide in*. The original term for *faith* is of the same derivation, and for the same reason—because it implies such a reliance on God as the worldly mind places on riches. So that *mammon* came to signify riches, because men so commonly put their trust on them. And when our Lord perceived the astonishment He had excited by exclaiming, “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven!” the only explanation which he gave, and which he deemed sufficient, imported that as the danger of riches consisted in

trusting in them, so the difficulty of possessing them, and not trusting in them is next to an impossibility—a difficulty which can only be surmounted by omnipotent grace. *Harris.*

So-called riches may free the life from many of its annoyances and cares, but beyond this their power of contenting the soul is ridiculously limited. Realizing, as most men do, how little, for example, the selfish spending of fifty thousand dollars annually can add to the sum total of life's enjoyments above the spending of ten thousand dollars, they have ceased expecting to extract much of satisfaction from the expenditure of wealth, unless it be a benevolent expenditure, and they usually devote their energies to the heaping up of riches, either from the gratification of pride, or from the steady, fixed habit of life. These things being so, it must be plain to all who are not morally idiotic that a man's life cannot consist in possessions external to himself of which he can make no use. A man's life consists in what he appropriates to himself, of that which ministers to the varied wants of his physical, intellectual, and spiritual nature, and he has the largest and truest life who appropriates most abundantly that which ministers to his higher and truer nature; so that we are not surprised to hear Jesus identifying life, even life eternal, with the loving knowledge of God as He is revealed in Jesus Christ. That man does not live, in any high sense of the word, who sits in miserly greed upon a heap of gold, neither spending nor enjoying, and fretted with the fear of losing. We have all heard of men whose resources were enormous, who thought themselves far poorer than many a man living on a small salary, for the man with the meagre income had an enlarged mind, a contented spirit, the temper of benevolence, freedom from anxiety, and a thorough trust in Him who said, and so saying has quieted many a fretful spirit: “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” And if he who miserably hoards is not rich, equally poverty-smitten is he who miserably spends on that which satisfieth not. Without peace of mind, without a loving heart, without domestic happiness, without an affectionate trust in God, unlimited money will vex and not content both the avaricious and the luxurious. It is the knowledge of God as good, made real in Jesus Christ, which underlies all earthly possessions and makes them good, which enters into all earthly enjoyment and makes it a blessing, which penetrates earthly experiences and takes from them their sting if they be sorrowful, and the fear-

ful dread of losing them forever if they be joyful. Our higher life rests ultimately in the knowledge of God as our Father, of ourselves as sprung from a Divine lineage, as heirs to an infinite patrimony, as the redeemed by a Divine sacrifice. Without such a faith the pessimist's creed is justified, that "life is not worth living," and may as well be ended at once. Human existence is a dismal and tragic failure, and all things that enter into it are lowered and cheapened. He who doubts, denies, or fails to rejoice in the goodness of God is allied to a philosophy that would be glad of the simultaneous suicide of all mankind. And such is the ultimate logical outcome of all philosophy which does not see that life consists not in goods, but in God; not in things external to the soul, but in the loving fellowship of the human with the Divine, by which man finds himself and his eternal Heaven by finding God. *J. H. Barrows.*

S, 9. Each trait of the description of the true servant of God is suggested by the contrast between him and the wicked. They make not God their strength, the Psalmist lives and prospers in God's house; they trust in riches, he in God's mercy; they are wholly given up to evil lusts, he waits only on God's name. *Cook.*

The green tree is a figure—at once beautiful and expressive—of that which is pleasant to the sight, useful, thriving, and enduring. The root of David's strength was finely indicated by locating this tree in the house of God. "I trusted," literally, *I have* trusted, but implying also the future: I will trust in God's name, which endures forever. "I will praise Thee forever, because Thou hast wrought"—achieved—he does not define what, but leaves us to assume it to be that which I trust Him for—viz., my safety and ultimate success in my life-work—the thing which God virtually promised when He called David to the throne of Israel. "I will wait on Thy name in the presence of the saints," making the most public manifestations of my grateful and absolute trust in my God. *C.*

S. Those that by faith and love dwell in the house of God shall be like green olive-trees there; the wicked are said to flourish like a bay-tree (37 : 35) which bears no useful fruit, though it have abundance of large leaves; but the righteous flourish like a green olive-tree which is fruitful as well as flourishing. **H.**—The verdant olive flourishing round the year, nourished by a rich soil, fostered by a pure element and glowing temperature, and giving to man freely what it freely receives from heaven,

may well represent David in his holy and happy condition while depending upon God and benefiting His people. *Anon.*

9. I will praise Thee forever. Like Thy mercy shall my thankfulness be. While others boast in their riches I will boast in my God; and when their glorying is silenced forever in the tomb, my song shall continue to proclaim the lovingkindness of Jehovah. *S.*

The common version, *I will wait on Thy name*, is not so happy as the one in the Prayer Book, *I will hope in Thy name*. The clause, *for it is good*, relates not to the act of expectation, but its object. He does not mean, "because it is good to hope in Thy name," but "because Thy name is good, and is therefore to be hoped in." **A.**—We know that His name is just the highest name for goodness and blessedness. We know that His is the mind to which evil is the supreme impossibility. We know that He is the God of truth and without iniquity; just and right is He. Amidst the multitude of promises which His munificence has prompted Him to make, we know that not one good word hath failed, but every yea has found its Amen. Amidst the multitude of creatures over which His sovereignty extends we know that there exists no instance of unkindness, or neglect, or oppression. And amidst the multitude of thoughts and emotions which make up the joys of Deity, we know that there is not one malevolent affection; but all is condescension to His creatures, care for their well-being, and delectation in their joy. *Hamilton.*

Thy saints. A saint is a believer in Christ, who is a partaker of His spirit, maintains a close walk, and keeps up a communion and fellowship with the Lord; lives in the fear of Him and in good conscience toward Him. He is chosen out of the world and separate from it; though in it he is not of it. He is warmly attached to the Lord's cause, is diligent in the means of his appointment, orders his steps by God's Word, and follows his Lord in the regeneration. Such souls the Lord hath sanctified, and such souls will ever sanctify Him. *William Huntington.*

Saints are made saints not by doing extraordinary or uncommon things, but by doing common things in an uncommon way, on uncommonly high principles, in an uncommonly self-sacrificing spirit. Be sure that this is the only substantial thing. The bits of knowledge that we call our learning, the bits of property that we call our wealth, the momentary vanities of delight that we call the conquests of social life—how swiftly they hurry to their graves, or

are lost in forgetfulness ! Nothing, nothing else but character survives, and character is Christ formed within. Character is an integral and not a fragmentary thing. It is a symmetrical growth, having laws, proportions, and vital conditions of its own. It cannot be a practical force without having its root in unseen reali-

ties, and its conscious source in the living God, and its perpetually replenished supply by communion with Him. There cannot be a developed and healthy saint without a constant putting forth of vitality and vigor in a principled activity of use and exercises of righteousness. F. D. H.

PSALM LIII.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN ; SET TO MAHALATH. MASCHIL OF DAVID

1 THE fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.

Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity ;

There is none that doeth good.

2 God looked down from heaven upon the children of men,

To see if there were any that did understand [*deal wisely*],

That did seek after God.

3 Every one of them is gone back ; they are together become filthy ;

There is none that doeth good, no, not one.

4 Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge ?

Who eat up my people *as* they eat bread,
And call not upon God.

5 There were they in great fear, where no fear was :

For God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee ;

Thou hast put them to shame, because God hath rejected them.

6 Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion !

When God bringeth back the captivity of his people,

Then shall Jacob rejoice, *and* Israel shall be glad.

THIS Psalm is only another version of the fourteenth Psalm, from which it differs in two particulars. First, in its use of the name of God, which here is Elohim, instead of Jehovah—a peculiarity which is characteristic of all the Psalms in the second book. Next, in the remarkable deviation (v. 5) from the language of the parallel passage in Psalm 14 : 5, 6. There seems to have been an intentional alteration, with a view of adapting the Psalm to different circumstances. Perhaps, as Bunsen suggests, a later poet may have wished to apply Psalm 14 to the events of his own time, when Israel was threatened by foreign enemies, and thus have sought to encourage the people to hope for deliverance by reminding them of God's help vouchsafed in former times of trouble. In this case vs. 4, 5 [5, 6] must be taken as referring to the past, not to the future. That of the two texts Psalm 14 is the original appears to me almost certain. P.

1. The fool hath said in his heart,

no God. This I dare affirm in knowledge of nature, that a little natural philosophy and the first entrance into it doth dispose the opinion to atheism ; but, on the other side, much natural philosophy and wading deep into it will bring about men's minds to religion ; wherefore atheism every way seems to be combined with folly and ignorance, seeing nothing can be more justly allotted to be the saying of fools than this, "There is no God." Bacon.

Truly it is only the fool who hath said in his heart, "No God," for to prove it one would need to be himself a god and to travel abroad over the surrounding universe till he had exhausted it. He must search backward through all the hidden recesses of eternity ; traverse in every direction the plains of infinitude ; he must sweep the outskirts of that space which is itself interminable, and then bring back to this little world of ours the report of a universal blank, wherein he had not met with one movement of a presiding God. For man not to know of a

God he has only to sink beneath the level of our common nature, but to deny Him he must be a god himself ; he must arrogate the ubiquity and omniscience of God Himself. *Hallock.*

An *atheist* there may be, but an *anti-atheist* there cannot possibly be. That is to say, a man may declare that he does not find any evidence that satisfies him of the existence of a God ; but no man may dare to say absolutely, There is not a God. The former is merely the expression of that individual's necessarily most limited, imperfect, and restricted experience ; but the latter proposition would imply that the individual had soared among the stars and ransacked the contents of the worlds that are there ; that he had descended to the caves of the ocean and explored the unknown treasures that are there ; that he had travelled through the mines and strata of the earth and discovered the hidden recesses and depths and mysteries there ; that, in short, he had been in time past possessed of omnipresence and omniscience, and in the exercise of two attributes of Deity had not discovered a God. The fact is, such an individual must be himself God in order to be in a position to announce the proposition, There is not a God. *Cumming.*

We are placed amidst the amazing scene of His works, extending on all sides from the point where we stand to far beyond anything *we* can distinctly conceive of infinity ; in a diversity which not eternal duration will suffice for any creature to take account of all ; having within one day, one hour, one instant, operations, changes, appearances to which the greatest angel's calculating faculty would be nothing ; combining design, order, beauty, sublimity, utility. Can we glance over the earth and into the wilderness of worlds in infinite space, without being impressed with the solemn thought that all this is but the sign and proof of something infinitely more glorious than itself ? And that there should be men who can survey the creation with a scientific enlargement of intelligence, and then say, "*There is no God,*" is one of the most hideous phenomena in the world. *J. F.*

Sin is always folly, and as it is the height of sin to attack the very existence of the Most High, so is it also the greatest imaginable folly. To say there is no God is to belie the plainest evidence, which is obstinacy ; to oppose the common consent of mankind, which is stupidity ; to stifle consciousness, which is madness. If the sinner could by his atheism destroy the God whom he hates there were some sense, although much wickedness, in his infidelity ; but as deny-

ing the existence of fire does not prevent its burning a man who is in it, so doubting the existence of God will not stop the Judge of all the earth from destroying the rebel who breaks His laws ; nay, this atheism is a crime which much provokes heaven and will bring down terrible vengeance on the fool who indulges it. *S.*

An atheist is a moral monster. Man has fallen, but not so low as to be satisfied with the atheist's cold, dark, and dreary creed. Recoiling from that, he has erred on the side of a multiplicity of gods. The soul craves for a god as the body craves for food. It clings to the thought as a creeper to the pole it climbs ; and rather than his spirit should want such a support, man will catch at the wildest and most childish notion of beings above himself—just as ivy, when it has not a rock, will embrace a rotten tree, or as a drowning wretch for lack of something better clutches at a straw. *Guthrie.*

In distresses he must be of all creatures the most helpless and forlorn ; he feels the whole pressure of a present calamity without being relieved by the memory of anything that is past, or the prospect of anything that is to come. Annihilation is the greatest blessing that he proposes to himself, and a halter or a pistol the only refuge he can fly to. But if you would behold one of these gloomy miscreants in his poorest figure, you must consider him under the terrors or at the approach of death. *Addison.* — I have heard of some that deny that there was a God ; yet never knew the man but when he was sick he would seek unto God for help ; therefore they do but lie that say there is no God ; they sin against the light of their own consciences ; they who most studiously go about to deny God yet cannot do it but some check of conscience will fly in their faces. *Augustine.*

Naked atheism is a repulsive creed. It is a mere and monstrous negation. It touches no sympathy ; it attracts, it stimulates no play of intellect ; under the deadly chill of its unlighted vacancy imagination cannot breathe. There is nothing about it refined, or subtle, or profound. It is the vulgarest form of infidelity, and has been professed by the coarsest minds. It demands no effort to comprehend it, and no skill to expound it. It is an arid and barren, a cold and dreary hypothesis, which no genius, not even that of Lucretius, could make either attractive or credible. *J. H. Riggs.*

Atheism is consistent with itself when, as in the French Revolution, it writes over the gateway to the grave, "Death is an eternal sleep." It is consistent with itself when it annuls every restraint that is exercised over wicked men by

the apprehension of a Supreme Judge and a final retribution. It is consistent with itself when it closes every temple of worship, and rends to atoms all those hallowed sympathies and hopes with which the soul of man is inspired to do and suffer on earth. It is consistent with itself when it leaves the unaided reason of man to grapple in blank despair with the fearful problems of his existence and destiny; when it sends him to the grave with all the racking uncertainty and doubt that invest the possibilities of a hereafter; when it robs the injured sufferer of the last hope of redress in the justice of heaven, and at the same time unbars the gates of every lawless passion and impulse, emancipating it from all sense of accountability or dread of retribution. If there is any one conception into which all these elements of the terrible, the sublime, and the despairing are compressed and combined it is that this scheme of existence, this moral and physical universe is without a controlling mind; without a God. Then life is only a brilliant dream, lighting its own way to the grave, kindled just long enough to flash upon the gloom that is to cover it. Man is an orphan, or a helpless child of uncertainty, want, guilt, and anguish. The world is a desert and a graveyard. Eternity is a terrible, unexplored chaos, the more terrible because unknown. The fond affections that would follow their loved object to the grave, and will not desert it even then—these are but the implements of our torment, the chains that we must wear to gall us. No hope lights up the parting hour of earth; no possible prospect of a blest reunion can extract its sting. We must stand shuddering over the fathomless gulf of annihilation and feed our fancy on the shadows that imagination summons out of its darkness. E. H. G.

Confession of a living atheist. When we look abroad over life, when we see how cruel fate often is; how nature, in the shape of floods, conflagrations, and disease strikes into our wisest plans and wrests from us the most cherished objects of our affection; when we see in society around us vice often exalted to honor and virtue trodden under foot, then we need to rise in spirit above the present pain to a future good, above the present wrong to a future right, above the present incompleteness to a future perfection. Then we need to feel that at the deep central heart of the world there abides an eternal purpose for whose accomplishment we, by our sufferings, are helping to pay the price. We need to feel that no effort is ever wasted, that no honest reaching out for the good is ever lost, that the great all is pressing forward toward a

high, a glorious goal. But how shall we obtain this conviction that there is a good tendency in things? *In the old religion it is based on revelation*; but how shall those who cannot accept revelation build it up in themselves? We cannot logically demonstrate it. It is in vain we go to science for help. All science seizes only a fragment of the whole. It can never hope to prove the certainty of the triumph of the good. There is only one way to obtain this conviction: Act the good, and then you will believe in it. *F. Adler, in N. A. Review.*

What sort of a world would be that in which materialism should bear sway? A world without God, even in dim traditionary sentiment; a world disenchanted of all the grandeur and loveliness with which a religious imagination has invested it; a world robbed of conscious liberty, crushed, benumbed by an iron fate, ubiquitous, perpetual, inescapable; a world without moral order, without moral law, without conscience, unvisited by remorse, unblessed by moral self-esteem; a world bounded and shut in by the leaden horizon and sunless sky of death; without any glimpse of fairer, more resplendent spheres; without any distant sky-bright prospect of millennium beyond millennium, rising like "Alps o'er Alps" in the perspective of immortality; a world without any Jacob's ladder, thronged with supernal forms of visitants from heaven to earth, and of transfigured saints ascending from earth to heaven; a world without the name, or memory, or wondrous example, or consoling presence, or Divine sweetness of Jesus our God! Of all this the materialism of the age seeks to rob mankind. *Z. Eddy.*

3. None that doeth good. It needed no revelation to tell us that sin is, that mankind is sinful. Without, within us is the fact, the experience, the evidence, the presence of sin. It is sin which makes life troublous and gives death its sting. The revelation of the fall tells of an entrance, of an inburst of evil into a world all good, into a being created upright; tells, therefore, of a nature capable of purity, of an enemy that may be expelled, and of a holiness possible because natural. From man's fall we infer a fall earlier yet and more mysterious. Once sin was not; and when it entered man's world it entered under an influence independent, not inherent. The first sin is also the specimen sin. It is in this sense, too, the original sin, that all other sins are copies of it. Unbelief first, then disobedience; then corruption, then self-excusing; then the curse and the expulsion—turn the page and you shall find a murder! *J. V.*

Left to itself the race not only revels in unholy imaginings and desires and purposes; it even exalts and adorns and glorifies its impure creations. It seeks to give them the charm of supreme and perfect literary form, polluting even the poetry of every nation. It bodies them forth in every form of art, until it would seem as if the only pure studios and art galleries of the world were those which nature holds high up above our corrupting touch, in the chaste skies of morn and even. In heathendom the very altars of religion have been dedicated to deities of unnameable loathsomeness. *W. F. Warren.*

What is it that sin does to a man? It averts his will from all that is good, and right, and true; it bribes his conscience; it impoverishes his heart of every pure affection; it squanders and lays waste all the treasures of his immortal soul; it gives him a bias and interest, as he fancies, in rejecting the message that comes to close quarters with him and his transgression. It makes him in love with his own passions and desires, and consequently not in love with the pure Word of the Divine truth; just as those old Israelites with their perverted taste longed for the leeks and onions and garlic, the strong-smelling and tasting dainties that they had got down in the land of their captivity, and said, "Our soul loathes this light bread," that came from God and had nothing in it to pamper sense and feed the flesh. Every transgression deprives us, in some degree, of power to receive the Divine Word of God's truth, and making it our own. And these demons of worldliness, of selfishness, of carelessness, of pride, of sensuality, that go careering through the soul are like the goblin horseman in the old legend; wherever that hoof-fall strikes, the ground is blasted, and no grass will grow upon it any more forever! The heart is trodden down by the rebel rout of beastly sins that go storming through that once fair garden, eating up what they can, and trampling down what they cannot eat. These turn it from the field in which seed may be sown, into the hard, beaten path where the seed only lies on the top, and never goes down at all. *A. M.*

5. *There have they feared a fear, because God hath scattered the bones of thy besieger; thou hast put (them) to shame, because God hath rejected them.* (See Psalm 14:5, 6.) The design to strengthen the expression is particularly clear in this case, where two verses are compressed into one, and the other changes all enhance the emphasis. Thus instead of a general assurance of Divine protection, *God is in the righteous genera-*

tion, we have here a description of their enemies' destruction in the most poetical and striking terms, *God hath scattered the bones of thy besieger*—literally, *thy encamper*, him that encampeth against thee. So, too, instead of the complaint that the wicked treat the faith of pious sufferers with contempt—the *counsel of the sufferer ye will shame because Jehovah is his refuge*—we have here the tables turned upon the scoffers by the scorn both of God and man; *thou hast put to shame (the individuals included in the collective phrase thy besieger), because God has rejected them*, an act implying both abhorrence and contempt. In this, which is by far the most considerable variation of the two editions, the existence of design is so apparent that the supposition of an inadvertent or fortuitous corruption seems preposterous. So far are the two Psalms from being contradictory, or even inconsistent, that they might be sung together, by alternate or responsive choirs, with the happiest effect. *A.*

These impious men had been absolutely confident of their power to maintain themselves against all opposition. Not recognizing the power of God to sweep away every combination of evil, they had come forward in perfect fearlessness, and the ruin that befell them was a terrible surprise. This verse corresponds with Psalm 14:5 only in the first line, after which another verse is there added, that has no counterpart here. But here, even more distinctly than there, some overwhelming calamity is referred to which cannot be identified historically.

6. The question may be asked, here or at Psalm 14, whether the poet is speaking of the race at large, in general terms, and without historic connection, or has in mind some special Divine interposition in behalf of the victims of oppression. His language in vs. 2 and 3 seems to describe humanity, as such and everywhere, as evil and not good. But such absolute ungodliness and utter abandonment to gross moral corruption as his words indicate can never have been universal. There was always a holy seed, a people of God who worshipped and served Him. Even this dark picture of crime is lighted up by more than one glimpse of an Israel quite distinct from the infamous world in the foreground. The seventh verse, with its pointed allusion to time and place in the adverb "there," shows clearly that the writer had before him a manifestation of peculiarly atrocious wickedness on the one hand, and of Divine justice in appropriate severity on the other. We have here an instance of judgment on a limited scale in the past, as symbolizing the com-

plete and final overthrow of evil in the future. But in being idealized it is generalized, and brought into the present, as belonging to all time, an object lesson for the world. This is the poet's true position in dramatic representation. The historic basis is found, if possible, among the occurrences of his own lifetime.

Having chosen this, it is easy to recall the past most vividly and to describe it as an eyewitness of events in their succession. David had a large store of such material, accumulated during the hard experiences of his early manhood, and giving profitable employment to his serene old age. *De Witt.*

PSALM LIV.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN; ON STRINGED INSTRUMENTS. MASCHIL OF DAVID: WHEN THE ZIPHITES CAME AND SAID TO SAUL, DOTH NOT DAVID HIDE HIMSELF WITH US?

1 SAVE me, O God, by thy name,
And judge me in thy might.
2 Hear my prayer, O God;
Give ear to the words of my mouth.
3 For strangers are risen up against me,
And violent men have sought after my soul:
They have not set God before them. [Selah
4 Behold, God is mine helper:
The Lord is of them that uphold my soul.

5 He shall requite the evil unto mine enemies:
Destroy thou them in thy truth.
6 With a freewill offering will I sacrifice unto
thee:
I will give thanks unto thy name, O LORD,
for it is good.
7 For he hath delivered me out of all trouble;
And mine eye hath seen *my desire* upon mine
enemies.

THE language of this Psalm is of so general a character that it might have been composed under almost any circumstances of peril. The Psalm consists of two principal divisions: A prayer to God to hear and to judge the cause of His servant, together with the reason for this prayer in the violence and unscrupulousness of the enemies who beset him (v. 1-3). The confident assurance that God will hear his prayer, and the promise and vow of thanksgiving for God's goodness which is thus anticipated (v. 4-7). P.—Two notes only sound from his harp: One a plaintive cry for help; the other thanksgiving for deliverance as already achieved. The two are bound together by the recurrence in each of "the name" of God, which is at once the source of his salvation and the theme of his praise. We have only to read the lowly petitions to feel that they speak of a spirit somewhat weighed down by danger, and relaxed from the loftier mood of triumphant trust. A. M.

TITLE. *For the musician, with accompaniment of stringed instruments, a meditation, by David, when the Ziphites had come and said to Saul:*

Doth not David hide himself with us? Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, had escaped to David, who was then in the fortified city of Keilah with 600 men, but received information from God through Abiathar that when Saul should invest the city the inhabitants would deliver him up. We meet him next in the wilderness of Ziph; the Ziphites betray him and pledge themselves to capture him, so that he is brought into the greatest straits, from which he was delivered only by an inroad of the Philistines, which compelled Saul to return from his pursuit of him (1 Sam. 23: 19). D.

1. Save me, O God! As David was at this time placed beyond the reach of human assistance, he must be understood as praying to be saved by the *name and the power of God*, in an emphatical sense, or by these in contradistinction to the usual means of deliverance. Though all help must ultimately come from God, there are ordinary methods by which He generally extends it. When these fail, and every earthly stay is removed, He must then take the work into His own hands. It was in such a situation that David here fled to the

saints' last asylum, and sought to be saved by a miracle of Divine power. *John Calvin.*

3. *Not to set God before them* is to act as if they did not remember or believe in His existence and His presence. The *Selah* indicates a pause of indignation and abhorrence. A.—*They have not set God before them*; they have quite cast off the thoughts of God; they do not consider that His eye is upon them, that, in fighting against His people they fight against Him, nor have they any dread of the certain fatal consequences of such an unequal engagement. What bonds of nature, or friendship, or gratitude, or covenant will hold those that have broken through the fear of God? *Selah*; *Mark this!* H.

When the hand is full and the purse is full, and the heart has all it can wish, there is danger lest men should forget God. "Son, take thine ease," is a very common feeling among those whose circumstances are, on the whole, fairly pleasant. They have no desire to see God, no desire to be with God. Let them be without changes, and they do not feel that God is essential to them at all, and they do not fear Him. All the changes of this life which unsettle us, derange our schemes, and destroy our pleasures are meant to appeal to us and to remind us that "here we have no continuing city"—that this is not our rest. *E. Mellor.*

4. *The upholder of my soul*—literally, "among them," or, "with them that uphold my soul." But this would not convey the meaning of the Psalmist. For God is not to him one out of many helpers, but the only true Helper. The use of the plural denotes the *class* or category of upholders in which God is, though, of course, without placing Him on a level with human helpers. (See the same grammatical figure in 118 : 7; Judges 11 : 35.)

6. *With free will*, or, with glad, willing heart, as the expression occurs in Num. 15 : 3. This explains the motive of the sacrifice. The offering would be a literal offering, as appointed by the law, but brought with the cheerfulness of a thankful heart. P.

There are many of us whose question seems to be, "How little can I get off with! How much can I retain?"—many of us whose effort is to find out how much of the world is consistent with the profession of Christianity, and to find the minimum of effort, of love, of service, of gifts which may free us from the obligation. And what does that mean? It means that we are slaves. It means that if we durst we would give nothing and do nothing. And what does that mean? It means that we do not care for

the Lord, and have no joy in our work. And what does that mean? It means that our work deserves no praise, and will get no reward. If we love Christ we shall be anxious, if it were possible, to do more than He commands us, in token of our loyalty to the King, and of our delight in the service. Of course, in the highest view, nothing can be more than necessary. Of course He has the right to all our work; but yet there are heights of Christian consecration and self-sacrifice which a man will not be blamed if he has not climbed, and will be praised if he has. What we want, if I might venture to say so, is extravagances of service. Judas may say, "To what purpose is this waste?" but Jesus will say, "He hath wrought a good work on Me." And the fragrance of the ointment will smell sweet through the centuries. A. M.

Many Christians, obedient to the call to "draw nigh unto God," are prone to cultivate too exclusively the inner graces. The beginning and ending of their prayers is, "Lord, increase our faith." But only the hemisphere of the Christian life has been traversed when one has experienced the delights of communion with his God. It is when the outward fruits of the spirit begin to cluster and drop by the wayside that the religious life begins to become joyful not only to its possessor, but to all within its radius. Among God's gifts faith has undisputed primacy. But the command is to "add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity." Our experimental religion is best proved when it lives in the experience of those with whom we deal. *Interior.*

6, 7. **Thanks to Thy name, for it is good.** The name—the revealed character of God—was the storehouse of all the saving energies to which he appealed in v. 1. It is the theme of his praise when the deliverance shall have come. It is almost regarded here as equivalent to the Divine personality—it is good, *it* has delivered him. Thus, we may say that this brief Psalm gives us as the single thought of a devout soul in trouble, the name of the Lord, and teaches by its simple pathos how the contemplation of God as He has made Himself known, should underlie every cry for help and crown every thanksgiving; whilst it may assure us that whosoever seeks for the salvation of that mighty name may, even in the midst of trouble, rejoice as in an accomplished deliverance. And all such thoughts should be held with a faith at

least as firm as the ancient Psalmist's, by us to whom the "name" of the Lord is "declared" by Him who is the full revelation of God, and the storehouse of all blessings and help to His "brethren." A. M.

The petitions are such as David might well have made after his conversation with Jonathan. The Psalm is evidently the song of one whose hand had been "strengthened in God." Its great central truth is, "God is mine Helper; the Lord is with them who (like Jonathan) uphold my soul." And there comes after that a happy exercise of the spirit of trust, enabling the Psalmist to say, "He hath delivered me out of all trouble." This result is wonderful and beautiful. How remarkable that in that wilderness of Judah, amid a life of hardship, exposure, and peril, with a powerful king thirsting for his blood, and using his every device to

get hold of him, he should be able to say of God, "He hath delivered me out of all trouble." It is the faith that removes mountains; it is the faith that worked so wonderfully when the lad with the sling and stones went out so bravely against the giant. What wonders cannot faith perform when it gets clear of all the entanglements of carnal feeling, and stands, firm and erect, on the promise of God! How infinitely would such a faith relieve and sustain us in the common troubles and anxieties of life, and in deeper perplexities connected with the cause of God. Take this short clause as marking out the true quality and highest attainment of simple faith, and resolve that you will not rest in your own endeavors till your mind reaches the state of tranquillity which it describes so simply—"He hath delivered me out of all trouble." W. G. B.

PSALM LV.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN; ON STRINGED INSTRUMENTS. MASCHIL OF DAVID.

- 1 GIVE ear to my prayer, O God ;
And hide not thyself from my supplication.
- 2 Attend unto me, and answer me :
I am restless in my complaint, and moan ;
- 3 Because of the voice of the enemy,
Because of the oppression of the wicked ;
For they cast iniquity upon me,
And in anger they persecute me.
- 4 My heart is sore pained within me :
And the terrors of death are fallen upon me.
- 5 Fearfulness and trembling are come upon
me,
And horror hath overwhelmed me.
- 6 And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove !
Then would I fly away, and be at rest.
- 7 Lo, then would I wander far off,
I would lodge in the wilderness. [Selah
- 8 I would haste me to a shelter
From the stormy wind and tempest.
- 9 Destroy, O Lord, *and* divide their tongue :
For I have seen violence and strife in the
city.
- 10 Day and night they go about it upon the
walls thereof :

- Iniquity also and mischief are in the midst
of it.
- 11 Wickedness is in the midst thereof :
Oppression and guile depart not from her
streets.
- 12 For it was not an enemy that reproached
me ;
Then I could have borne it :
Neither was it he that hated me that did
magnify himself against me ;
Then I would have hid myself from him :
- 13 But it was thou, a man mine equal,
My companion, and my familiar friend.
- 14 We took sweet counsel together,
We walked in the house of God with the
throng.
- 15 Let death come suddenly upon them,
Let them go down alive into the pit :
For wickedness is in their dwelling, in the
midst of them.
- 16 As for me, I will call upon God ;
And the LORD shall save me.
- 17 Evening, and morning, and at noonday,
will I complain, and mean :

And he shall hear my voice.
 18 He hath redeemed my soul in peace from
 the battle that was against me :
 For they were many *that strove* with me.
 19 God shall hear, and answer them,
 Even he that abideth of old, [Selah
 The men who have no changes,
 And who fear not God.
 20 He hath put forth his hands against such as
 were at peace with him :
 He hath profaned his covenant.
 21 His mouth was smooth as butter,

But his heart was war :
 His words were softer than oil,
 Yet were they drawn swords.
 22 Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he
 shall sustain thee :
 He shall never suffer the righteous to be
 moved.
 23 But thou, O God, shalt bring them down
 into the pit of destruction :
 Bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live
 out half their days ;
 But I will trust in thee.

A COUNTERPART to Psalm 41, which refers to the same intrigue and hatred of enemies, and to the same treacherous friend. It belongs to the time just before David's dethronement by the partisans of Absalom under the crafty lead of Ahithophel. The latter is the person whose faithlessness is complained of, and he is well called "the Old Testament Judas." (See 2 Sam 15.) *De Witt.*

As this Psalm is in the title ascribed to David, and as it contains a bitter complaint of the faithlessness of a trusted friend, it has been commonly supposed to refer to the desertion and treachery of Ahithophel in Absalom's rebellion. One thing is certain, and that is, that whoever the hollow friend may have been, who knew so well to cloak his treacherous designs—who with war in his heart could use words smoother than oil—his perfidy was very deeply felt and very bitterly resented by the man who here records it. At one moment sadness, at another indignation prevails. The abruptness in many parts of the Psalm is to be accounted for, to a great extent, by the strong emotion under which it was written.

The Psalm consists of three principal divisions : The first contains the earnest appeal to God against his enemies, the expression of his suffering, and the horror of mind which has come upon him, together with the longing to escape from the hostility to which he was exposed, and the evil he was compelled to witness (vs. 1-8). In the next his tone changes. The portentous wickedness which has filled the whole city, and worse even than this, the perfidy of the man he had trusted, rouse his indignation, and he prays that all the counsels of the wicked may be brought to naught, and that they themselves may go down alive into the grave (vs. 9-15). The last strophe is altogether in a calmer strain. It opens and closes with the confession of trust in God ; and though the figure of the traitor again comes prominently into view,

it does not provoke the same burning imprecation as before. Instead of this, the Psalmist rests calmly confident that the righteous shall never be moved, and that the bloodthirsty and deceitful man shall speedily be cut off (vs. 16-23). P.

TITLE. *To the Chief Musician. With (or on) stringed instruments. A didactic Psalm. By David.* The Psalm is designated as a *Maschil*, because it might at first sight seem to have relation merely to a case of personal maltreatment and distress, whereas it is a general description of the sufferings of God's people, or the righteous as a class, at the hands of false friends and malignant enemies. Although there seem to be allusions to the writer's own experience, in the times both of Saul and Absalom, the whole description can be applied exclusively to neither. A.

6. Don't spend your time in wishing for wings, or for anything else that is impossible. Not that there is anything wrong in a wish, unless that we wish for what is wrong. Wishes will come flying into our minds, as little birds sometimes hop in at an open window. But do not feed and fondle them. Let them fly away again. Wishing is profitless work, even for possible things. God gave David something much better than wings. Read vs. 16, 17, 22, and look at the last six words of v. 23, and you will see how this was. Often God denies our wishes that He may give us something better than we ask or think. The Lord Jesus needed no wings to fly up to heaven. And we need no wings to get near enough to Him to talk to Him. Ask Him to help you to use your hands and feet in His service. Love to Him will be better than the winged shoes you read of in the old Greek fables. It will make your feet swift and your hands nimble for every duty and every kindness. *E. R. Conder.*

To sigh is sometimes natural, but to waste time in sighing, to suffer ourselves to be ab-

sorbed in the dark side of life, to exclude ourselves from its many and estimable gladnesses, is unthoughtful and useless. No good and great life will ever suffer itself to be crippled by conquerable melancholy. If we sigh for our own weakness and sins, we cannot, indeed, fly to ourselves, but we can fly to the grace of God and amend ourselves. If we sigh for our surroundings, no wings of a dove, indeed, can bear us away from the dwellings of Meshach and the tents of Kedar; but, by God's grace, we may help to make them better and happier places; for, after all, at all times of our pilgrimage, primary duties

" Shine aloft like stars,
And charities, that soothe and heal and bless,
Lie scattered at the feet of men like flowers."

Sorrow may take from life its delights, but it can never take its duties. At the lowest ebb of dejection we still have much to do. That was a good motto, "Work here, rest elsewhere, cease thy sighing. do thy work, the day is short, the work abundant, the laborers few, the reward is great." *Farrar*.

7. To lodge is here to take up one's abode. *The wilderness*, not necessarily a barren desert but an uninhabited region, the essential idea here being that of separation from human society, a strong though indirect mode of affirming its extreme corruption. The strength of the feeling which prompted this desire is indicated by a solemn pause. A.

9. The tone of sadness and melancholy now gives way to one of hot and passionate indignation. He would have escaped if he could from that city of sinners, who vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their ungodly deeds; but as he could not do this, he would gladly see God's judgments executed upon them. The sudden outburst of these fervent, impetuous feelings gives an irregularity to the whole poem. But this is natural.

14. The first clause speaks of private intimacy, the next of association in public acts, and especially in the great festivals and processions to the Temple.

15. Again, indignation at the blackness of this treachery, so far worse to be endured than any open enmity. To have trusted, and to find his trust betrayed; to have been one with a man in public and in private, bound to him by personal ties and by the ties of religion, and then to find honor, faith, and affection all cast to the winds—this it was that seemed so terrible; this it was that called for the withering curse. Thus the second strophe ends as it began (v. 9), with imprecations upon the wicked; the

intervening stanzas, in describing the faithlessness of the trusted friend, giving the reason for this anathema. P.

15. *Desolations (are) upon them! They shall go down to Sheol alive! For evils are in their dwellings, in their heart.* All that the Hebrew words express is a confident anticipation. The common version of the first words (*let death seize upon them*) is founded on the masoretic reading; but the best critics now prefer the older reading in the text, which, instead of a verb and a singular noun, exhibits one noun in the plural number, meaning *desolations*, and agreeing with the substantive verb understood. *Sheol*, the grave, the state of the dead, the wide old English sense of *hell*. There is an obvious allusion to another great historical type of God's retributory judgments, the destruction of Korah and his company, who *went down alive into the pit* (Num. 16 : 33). A.—There is justice in the universe, love itself demands it; pity to rebels against God, as such, is no virtue—we pray for them as creatures, we abhor them as enemies of God. We need in these days far more to guard against the disguised iniquity which sympathizes with evil, and counts punishment to be cruelty, than against the harshness of a former age. S.

16, 17. Another change of tone, now sweet and solemn, with the name Jehovah, for the first time in the Psalm, speaking of inward hope and sure salvation. There may possibly be an allusion to prayers habitually offered thrice daily, but the Psalmist is speaking now of his unceasing supplication in the time of trial. *Cook*.—"As for me" well indicates the strong contrast which David designedly puts between his case and that of his enemies. They, prayerless and awfully wicked, go down suddenly and fearfully to their own place; but I cry to my God for help, and in Him I find precious salvation. This allusion to David's stated times for prayer is interesting as showing that he lived in the atmosphere of prayer, waiting continually upon his God at all times, and pre-eminently in all his straits. C.

This is the excellent advantage of the prayer of faith, that it quiets and establishes the heart in God. Whatever be his estate and desire, when once the believer hath put his petition in God's hand, he rests content in holy security and assurance concerning the answer, refers it to the love and wisdom of God how and when He will answer; not doubting that whatsoever it be, and whensoever, it shall both be gracious and seasonable. *Leighton*.—A father encourages his child to make known his wishes, and

lets him know that they will be attended to. This does not imply that every one of the petitions will be granted, even those that are capricious, or which the father knows might injure his boy. He complies with the entreaties, so far as this can be done consistently with the wise regulations of his household, so far as circumstances admit, and so far as the youth's best welfare is not interfered with. It is much the same with our heavenly Father when we are assured that 'if men who are evil know how to give good things to their children, much more shall our heavenly Father give good things to those who ask Him.' The two cases, indeed, that our heavenly and that of our earthly father, are not identical, but they are parallel, and the earthly may throw light on the heavenly. God, in His sovereign wisdom and for our good, has laid down governmental laws, and these He cannot be expected to contravene; and much as He may yearn to grant the requests of those who pray, yet He will not do so when this might injure their best interests; He will not, for instance, give them wealth when this might make them vain and proud, or tempt them into sinful indulgences. *McCosh.*

You may confidently take up David's conclusion—"The Lord shall save me." Is not this too bold? Yes, if founded upon anything in yourself as the cause why God should save you, it is daring presumption; but from the Lord's absolute declarations, full and free promises given us in Christ, we are divinely warranted thus to conclude. Then take and prize the Lord's word as your blessed charter of salvation; plead before Him; expect all salvation from Him, even victory over all sin, deliverance from every trouble, the comfort of holiness here, and the joys of glory in eternity—"All are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." *W. Mason.*

17. Evening and morning. The three principal parts of the day are mentioned, either as marking special times set apart for prayer, or as a poetical expression for "the whole day," "at all times," "without ceasing." P.—It is as impossible for the soul to live and thrive without daily prayer, as for the body to live and thrive without daily food. Our graces are like plants that need daily watering; lamps that need daily filling; bodies that need daily feeding. It is as necessary for the graces of the inner, as for the strength, and health, and life of the outward man that we should wait on God to say, "Give me day by day my daily bread." *Guthrie.*

Easiness of desire is a great enemy to the

success of a good man's prayer. It must be an intent, zealous, busy, operative prayer. For, consider what a huge indecency it is, that a man should speak to God for a thing that he values not. Our prayers upbraid our spirits, when we beg tamely for those things for which we ought to die; which are more precious than imperial sceptres, richer than the spoils of the sea, or the treasures of the Indian hills. *Bishop J. Taylor.*—It is frequent converse with God which begetteth a particular acquaintance with Him, a mindful regard of Him, a hearty liking to Him, a delightful taste of His goodness, and consequently a sincere and solid good-will toward Him; but intermission thereof produceth estrangement or enmity toward Him. If we seldom come at God, we shall little know Him, not much care for Him, scarce remember Him, rest insensible of His love and regardless of His favor; a coldness, a shyness, a distaste, an antipathy toward Him will by degrees creep upon us. Abstinence from His company and presence will cast us into conversations destructive or prejudicial to our friendship with Him. *Barrow.*

As we are creatures of impulse, inspiration, liberty, so also we are creatures of drill, and there is no way to perfect or establish us in anything unless we could be required to do what we are not inclined to do; to appoint our times of prayer, keep ourselves in rounds of observance, and hold fast in the punctual discipline of times. If we have no times in religion but such as we take by mere impulse or inclination, we shall fall away at last from all times and all duties. Let any one take the ground, for example, that he will never pray except when he is drawn to it, and he will less and less frequently be drawn. If any one tells me that he cannot pray when he is disinclined or not moved to it, and would feel it even to be an act of insincerity, I understand that he prays very seldom, and perhaps never. Such a rule of prayer would gradually let down the best Christian, and finally take him quite away from the exercise. If instead of girding himself to what interest he may find, he yields to his mere self-indulgence, that self-indulgence will rot away his confidence, exterminate his peace, turn itself into habitual disinclination, and so, by a fixed law, put an end to his praying altogether. Let any most dull and worldly minded Christian gather himself up to the established rule of prayer for three times, twice, or even once a day, determined not to have it as a mere observance, but as an exercise of grace and practical waiting on God, and it will not be long before

he is truly restored and walks in liberty. So that if we grant the inherent defect of any and all prayers in which there is nothing better than a forced exercise, no impulse, no liberty, the true way to be in liberty, and be kept habitually there, is to live in that holy routine which is the bond of all true application, and the certain method of all earnestness and fidelity. And accordingly it will be found, as a matter of fact, that they who are readiest to endure hardness, and have least delicacy about forcing themselves in constrained exercises, have really most liberty, live closest to God, enjoy most of His smile, and as they keep up the rounds of duty most faithfully, will have really least feeling of constraint, or even think of it as no constraint at all. *Bushnell.*

And He shall hear my voice. He is confident that he will prevail; he makes no question that he would be heard; he speaks as if already he were answered. When our window is opened toward heaven, the windows of heaven are open to us. Have but a pleading heart, and God will have a plenteous hand. S.

18. The battle against me. Many a great battle turns at last on the reserve. Life's battles and crises are determined in like manner, oftentimes, by the reserve or the absence of reserve. We must all be assailed by temptations and by spiritual foes, when victory can be gained only if we have reserves of resistance to call into action. We must all stand before tasks and duties which will altogether baffle our ability if we have no more strength to draw on than we have been using in the common duties of the common days. Blessed are they who have learned to draw on the infinite resources of Divine strength; with the fulness of God as reserve they can never fail. J. R. M.

19. God will hear and answer them, and (He) inhabiting antiquity (will hear and answer those) *to whom there are no changes, and (who) fear not God.* As He has heard me in mercy, so will He hear them in wrath. As He has answered my prayer in the way described above (v. 18), so will He answer them in the way described below (v. 23). In this case, what is heard and answered is not prayer, but *the voice of the enemy* (v. 3), and his malignant slanders (v. 12). *Inhabiting antiquity*, or as the English Bible phrases it, *he that abideth of old*. The first Hebrew verb, however, could not fail to suggest its primary meaning, which is to *sit*, and more especially to *sit enthroned*, as a sovereign and a judge. A.—God will hear and answer them—*i.e.*, as their wicked prayer deserves. “He that abideth of old” is not merely He who *liveth*

of old, but He who sits enthroned of old, from everlasting, the Eternal King. “Selah;” think of this: He who has reigned through all the ages of the eternal Past, will not He subdue the wicked beneath His feet? Then, continuing the construction without pause, we may translate: “God will hear and answer them to whom there are no changes and who fear not God.” The word for “changes” might possibly refer to inward, moral changes; but its current usage as well as the logic of this passage strongly favor its reference to physical changes of condition—*e.g.*, calamities, reverses. God will hear and answer (in righteous justice) those who, long prosperous, have been hardened in iniquity, past all wholesome fear of His name. C.

Because they have no changes, no afflictions, no interruption to the constant course of their prosperity, no crosses to empty them from vessel to vessel, *therefore they fear not God*, they live in a constant neglect and contempt of God and religion, which is the cause of all their other wickedness, and by which they are certainly marked for destruction. H.—Their prosperity keeps a settled course, and because they find all things going on in the old course of Providence, therefore they go on in their old course of sinfulness, “*they fear not God;*” intimating that as such *changes* always should, so usually they do, awaken fear; and that, if the Lord would but change, and toss, and tumble them about, by various troublesome dispensations, surely they would fear him. *Caryl.*

To you who prosper in everything, and are agitated by no kind of adversity, no word of God is more pointedly serious than this. The danger is that, disturbed by no crosses, unsettled by no changes, you will finally become so fast-rooted in pride and forgetfulness of God as to miss everything most dear in existence. Nothing could be more perilous for you than just that which you deem your happiness. *Bushnell.*

The only thing perfectly certain in life is its changefulness. The law of changes is a law that cannot change. It has already been carried out in every life that has ever lived on earth; it shall be carried out to the letter in our lives. There is a ministry in changes—a ministry of grace, which He who changes not would work in us; and they who have no changes must lose that ministry, and do in fact encounter perils in their spiritual life. One peril of prosperity is deadness and dulness toward truth; hearing as though one heard not; seeing as though one saw not; handling and tasting the bread and wine of truth as though no consecrating hands were offering

them to us, no Word Incarnate saying of them : They are My Body and My Blood. Another peril which comes in the absence of changes is the decay of gratitude. They to whom life has long been rich and full, and sheltered from impoverishing changes, are in danger of losing that blessed grace of gratefulness which sanctifies the joy of possession. One may have his church so abundantly, his home so familiarly, his health so confidently that all conception of these things as gifts of God may fade from him. Another peril, and a greater one, which comes in the absence of changes, is the loss of the sense of dependence. Into many a life has crept that most subtle and most terrible loss, in times of unbroken, unchanged happiness. The loss of the sense of dependence has affected the soul's judgment concerning earthly things ; it has undermined its earnestness in prayer ; it has tempted it to entrust life to the guidance of its own sagacity, rather than to the guidance of the Spirit and the providence of God. *C. C. Hall.*

20, 21. David reverts suddenly to the fixed and deepest thought in his heart, the treachery of his friend. Deeply as he felt the revolt of his son, that probably did not surprise him ; it was in accordance with previous indications of his character ; but Ahithophel's treason came on him without any preparation. *Cook.*

22. *Cast upon Jehovah (what) He gives thee, and He will sustain thee ; He will never suffer the righteous to be moved.* What He gives thee to endure, what He lays upon thee, cast thou upon Him, by trusting in Him. *A.—Cast thy burden upon the Lord.* Hand it over, heave it upon Him, and *He shall sustain thee*, shall bear both, if thou trust Him with both ; both thee and thy burden ; *He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.* *Leighton.*

Scarcely do we find in the Bible stronger expressions of anxiety and distress than in this Psalm. The writer's first impulse was to free himself from the annoyances occasioned by the wickedness of others and the responsibilities that were laid upon him, by fleeing away and remaining in solitude. But better counsels prevailed. Instead of casting off his responsibilities and fleeing from his troubles, he was led to see that there was a God on high who was able to sustain him under the one, and to deliver him from the other, and to go to Him in earnest and confiding prayer. "As for me," says he, "I will call upon God ; and the Lord shall save me." Having thus found the true source of relief and strength, he invites others to share it with him : "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall

sustain thee ; He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." *M. Hopkins.*

God has taken our care upon Him already. It is no burden to Him, and He knows it would crush us, and He has assumed it. He understands our shortsightedness and weakness and frailty. He knows well how liable to err in our management we should be, even with the best intentions, and for interests dearest of all to our hearts. These interests, all that can affect our happiness, peace, and welfare here and hereafter, enter into His great scheme of universal Providence—that scheme which is to subdue all evil, enthrone right for an undisputed eternity—and are there and thus provided for ; not apart, indeed, from our loyalty, our prayers, and our obedience, but in connection with them, and so made forever secure. He has arranged and provided for all, as our Father and Friend, guarding our treasures against the time of our glad inheritance. *A. L. Stone.*

Every soul has an individual life, and an individual history ; then, as we are each a separate creation, so we are each a separate care to God. We are shut out from fellow-creatures in the seclusion of individuality that we may be shut in more closely with God. We differ from others that God may deal with each of us personally, that He may know us, love us, watch over us individually. God gives us special care, because He needs various workers. Each of us is sent into the world to do some particular work in some special place, and the very specialty of each one's experience brings things to him in an aspect which cannot be exactly the same to any other. What a thought of precious comfort, that each one of us is the object of God's care as much as if we were the only being in the universe. Surely ! it is a balm for every sorrow to think that we may cast ourselves and our burdens upon God's infinite care. *Hallock.*

What if we should, each one, read the verse for awhile just as it is and live by it. "Cast thy burden on the Lord." "Thy burden"—not thy neighbor's ; "thy burden"—not the burden of sin, the spiritual burden, the temporal burden, the big burden, the little burden ; not any one or two or three of these alone, but all of them and every other conceivable burden. "Cast thy burden on the Lord," and put Him to the test of His sustaining power. Will it fail, think you ? *Interior.*

When you have prayed to God about your distresses, and cast them upon Him, learn to be silent and be at peace. Your affairs are His affairs. If you have tried to live as His servant, and to do all things to please Him, He is your

partner in business, and the real Head of the firm. He can protect you from misfortunes ; but if He wants you to serve Him in trouble, it is because He can make trouble do more for you than prosperity. "Rest in the Lord." The great life you live in Him is your true life, and none of the uncertainties or accidents of your external condition can touch it. *Hallock.*

"*Thy burden,*" or what thy God lays upon thee, lay thou it "*upon the Lord.*" His wisdom casts it on thee, it is thy wisdom to cast it on Him. He cast thy lot for thee, cast thy lot on Him. He gives thee thy portion of suffering, accept it with cheerful resignation, and then take it back to Him by thine assured confidence. S.

He shall sustain thee. The word "sustain" well expresses the sense of the Hebrew, which, though sometimes used for support and nourishment by food, yet readily admits the wider sense, *uphold*, sustain—*i.e.*, to bear the lot of care, labor, or suffering which God may appoint. The passage is essentially reproduced by Peter : "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." Of kindred sentiment is Psalm 37 : 5 : "Commit thy way unto the Lord ; trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." No words can adequately express the richness and preciousness of these promises in their practical relations to the cares and burdens of every-day life. Every heart has its burdens ; every heart knoweth its own as none else save God can know them. But this broad promise proffers all needful help under every burden. C.

It is very difficult to sympathize with one another's burdens ; and of course each, knowing only his own, thinks his own the heaviest. Christ alone can sympathize with all. But your burden is the one main thing you have to do with, suited for present discipline, a selected, ordained, adjusted thing—"thy burden." Leave the balancing, and trust the Balancer. The Lord does not say, "I will take away thy burden," but "I will sustain thee." He will be "your arm every morning," on which leaning you cannot faint. He will feed you with such hidden manna that you will grow so strong that you can carry anything. *J. Vaughan.*—True confidence in God and resting upon God will both free thee of thy burden and also bring in the strength of God to sustain and bear thee up from falling. Wouldst thou, therefore, own God as thy strength and fetch strength from God to thy soul? Rest upon God, roll thyself upon Him, and that, in

time of greatest weakness ; in time of greatest service ; in times of greatest trials. *S. Blackerby.*

To the humble and obedient soul life has not one burden too many to carry, or one difficulty too severe to encounter ; it says : All these things are appointed as gracious necessities in the perfecting of my education ; I know that all things work together for good to them whose love is set upon the living God. This spirit drives away impatience and tranquillizes the soul with confidence. If the children of God suffered nothing but punishment, those who look on from the outside might well wonder as to the rewards and issues of virtue even in this world ; but chastening is not punishment, it is training, it is education, it is experience, it is part of an inscrutable but beneficent method. J. P.

On most of those whom He loveth God layeth some burden. He gives them something to carry, and carry *through*. There are some burdens which go beyond our own ability, and in bearing which vain is the help of fellow-creatures. It is therefore unspeakably kind and gracious in the Lord that He invites us to communicate such solitudes and sorrows to Himself, offering to sustain us under them or to sustain them in our stead. The burden, the care, or calamity which God helps us to carry will hurt us far less, and will be much more easily borne, than a minor sorrow to which we bring only our own resources, or at best the aid of a fellow-creature. The believer is no burden to his God, and He will not suffer the righteous to be removed. *Hamilton.*

Every true Christian has his own special burden of humiliation, difficulty, self-denial to carry. Mine is not the same as my fellow's, but all of us are cross-bearers. Some of us try to get off, as the Crusaders did, by having a bit of red rag cut cross-shape and sewed on our sleeves. That is the fashionable sort of discipleship ; but it is not real. The cross is heavy, and hard to carry ; but, unless we do carry it, we are not His. And all the procession of cross-bearers go after the Lord. That implies the imitation of Jesus as the very badge of discipleship, and it contains a blessed lightening of the severity of the previous requirement ; for, if we follow after Him, our crosses grow light, remembering His, and with Him for leader and companion. A. M.

The true way to live is to yield to no burden, to carry the heaviest load with courage and gladness, never to let one's eyes be turned downward toward the earth, but to keep them ever lifted up to the hills. Men whose work re-

quires them to stoop all the time, to work in a bent posture, every now and then may be seen straightening themselves up, taking a long, deep breath of air, and looking up toward the skies. Thus their bodies are preserved in health and in erectness in spite of their work. If, however, they never straighten up, they soon grow into the bent form in which they have to work. Whatever their toil or burden, men should train themselves to look often upward, to stand erect and get a glimpse of the sky of God's love, and a breath of heaven's pure, sweet air. Thus they will keep their souls erect under the heaviest load of work or care. J. R. M.

That state to which the Master refers when He forbids us to take thought is not foresight, neither is it sagacity. It is not prevision. It is anxious fretting. It is anxious forethought, and afterthought, too; for men fret both ways—for what is past and for what is coming; up and down; in all ways; in every direction; in ways imaginable and unimaginable. *Anon.*—Foresight and foreboding are two very different things. It is not that the one is the exaggeration of the other, but the one is opposed to the other. The more a man looks forward in the exercise of foresight, the less he does so in the exercise of foreboding. And the more he is tortured by anxious thoughts about a possible future, the less clear vision has he of a likely future, and the less power to influence it. A. M. —We have nothing to do with to-morrow until we get to it. When the day comes with its cares, then we may meet them and then God will provide for them. Duty only is ours—the faithful, diligent doing of God's will day by day. The rest is God's, and anxious care is unbelief. Our Father will surely take care of us if we are only faithful to Him. Away, then, with anxiety. Do your work, your duty, the bit of God's will for the day, and let God care for you. Then the peace of God shall keep your heart and mind. J. R. M.

Even the innocent cares of life sometimes render it a burden. Toil for a living in such conditions as this world gives us is a daily disquietude. Human labor is heavily weighted with human wrongs. Competitions, rivalries, deceits, overreachings, treacheries, enmities, heartburnings, and oppressions make up large fragments of the life of trade. To encounter safely its conditions in this world, we need to make life itself a continuous prayer. We need to retire into God's silence in the stillness of a state of prayer. Meditation and prayer are twin helpers to spiritual repose. The busiest and most heavily burdened life is full of spiritual

analogies, by the aid of which thought may alternate in quick succession between earth and heaven, between daily toil and God. Thus the most laborious life may be enclosed in God's thoughts, and made tributary to His plans. In no other way can we live in sympathy with God, or be assured of God's sympathy with us. For such a hidden life, we need unwavering sympathy with Him who rose up a great while before day, and departed into a solitary place and prayed; and who continued all night in prayer—"The morning star finding Him where the evening star left Him." *Phelps.*

The child of God lays his affairs and himself on God, and so hath no pressing care. No care but the care of love, how to please, how to honor his Lord; and in this he depends on Him, too, both for skill and strength; and, touching the success of things, leaves that as none of his to be burdened with; casts it on God, and He careth for it. They need not both care, His care alone is sufficient; hence peace, inconceivable peace. *Be careful for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Jesus Christ. Leighton.*

23. This verse sounds like a prophetic anticipation of the suicide of Abithophel, and the fate of Absalom; but the Psalmist probably does but express a fixed conviction in the justice of God. *Cook.*—God's laws are no insignificant things to be broken with impunity. They are immutable, adamantine ordinances, set to guard all great and universal interests, lifting themselves up as impassable barriers between sin and holiness, and as long as God reigns they will never be relaxed in one tittle of their righteous requirements, nor fail one jot of their full vindication. *Hallock.*

Shall not live out half their days.

A wicked man never lives out half his days; for either he is cut off before he hath lived half the course of nature, or he is cut off before he hath lived a quarter of the course of his desires; either he lives not half so long as he might, or not a tenth part so long as he would; and therefore let him die when he will, he dies out of season. He never kept time or season with God, and surely God will not keep or regard his time or season. *Caryl.*—Sin is a shortener of everything; it consumes our wealth, it confines our liberty, it impeacheth our health, and it abbreviateth our life, and brings us speedily unto our graves. *Griffith Williams.*

I will trust. Trust awakens fortitude. It

gives strength of heart and hope ; inspires courage ; lights the eye ; nerves the impotent arm ; plucks victory from defeat. Hope that is born of faith makes a man patient and strong. Amid all life's vicissitudes he is sustained by the thought that within and around all things is the unfailing mercy of God. When the hearts of other men are failing them for fear on

account of the future of the world, he dwells in quietness. He sees the evil looming up ; he knows that the storm will break ; but he is not afraid of the issue, believing that it does not turn on the question of big battalions, but on the question as to what side has God on it. It is the goodness of God that he expects to see, and that vision cannot fail him. *J. M. Campbell.*

PSALM LVI.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN : SET TO JONATH ELEM REHOKIM. A PSALM OF DAVID : MIGHTAM :
WHEN THE PHILISTINES TOOK HIM IN GATH.

1 BE merciful unto me, O God ; for man would
swallow me up :
All the day long he fighting oppresseth me.
2 Mine enemies would swallow me up all the
day long :
For they be many that fight proudly against
me.
3 What time I am afraid,
I will put my trust in thee.
4 In God I will praise his word :
In God have I put my trust, I will not be
afraid ;
What can flesh do unto me ?
5 All the day long they wrest my words :
All their thoughts are against me for evil.
6 They gather themselves together, they hide
themselves,
They mark my steps,
Even as they have waited for my soul.

7 Shall they escape by iniquity ?
In anger cast down the peoples, O God.
8 Thou tellest my wanderings :
Put thou my tears into thy bottle ;
Are they not in thy book ?
9 Then shall mine enemies turn back in the
day that I call :
This I know, that God is for me.
10 In God will I praise *his* word :
In the LORD will I praise *his* word.
11 In God have I put my trust, I will not be
afraid ;
What can man do unto me ?
12 Thy vows are upon me, O God :
I will render thank offerings unto thee.
13 For thou hast delivered my soul from death.
Hast thou not delivered my feet from falling ?
That I may walk before God
In the light of the living.

HERE again the title is a sufficient guide. The Psalm is connected with the seizure of David by the Philistines, and his presentation to Achish, the King of Gath, as the champion of Israel (1 Sam. 21 : 10-15). *De Witt.*—It is a characteristic possessed in common by the Psalms of this period, that the prospect of the judgment that will come upon the whole of the hostile world is combined with David's prospect of the judgment that will come upon his enemies (7 : 8 ; 55 : 8 ; 59 : 5). D.

The complaint of one who, though hard pressed by enemies, nevertheless trusts in God, rests in His promises, flees to Him for succor, and renders thanks for His mercy, Through-

out, his confidence never forsakes him. Indeed, we see here the victory rather than the struggle of faith. Hence the refrain, with which the first and second parts conclude, "In God will I praise His Word. What can flesh (man) do unto me?" The Psalm falls naturally into three divisions : The first and second scarcely differ in their subject-matter. They each contain a cry for help against enemies, and an expression of confidence in God ; the second, however, being somewhat more emphatic than the first. The first consists of vs. 1-4 ; the second of vs. 5-11. The Psalm then concludes (vs. 12, 13) with words of devout thankfulness. P.

2. The word translated "O Thou Most

High" (A. V.) is commonly an adverb, meaning proudly, as from a higher position and with superior claims. In this sense it would here describe the spirit of their fighting against Him. Hebrew usage does not sustain our translators in taking it as a name of God. C.

3. Trust in God does not make us cease to be men, and to have the feelings of men; but it gives a better than any stoical calmness; it lifts the man who is trembling in himself above the fear which assails him; in the very midst of fear it listens to the voice which says, Fear not, for I am with thee. "Assuredly," says Calvin, "this is the true test and proof of our faith: when fears harass us, so far as our fleshy nature is concerned, but do not overthrow and unsettle our minds." P.

It is a good maxim with which to go into a world of danger; a good maxim in a storm, and when in danger on the land; a good maxim when we are sick; a good maxim when we think of death and the judgment—"What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee." Barnes. —If we accustomed ourselves to think of our common mercies, to study God as an affectionate parent in His every-day dealings; if we thought of His love as sustaining us at night, awakening us in the morning, and guarding us during the daytime; if we saw His love in everything; felt it in the beating of the pulse, heard it in the voices of friendship around us, it could hardly be that we should think it withdrawn from us the moment we were overtaken by any sorrow. We should have this truth, then, graven upon our minds: our common mercies are the best preparations for trials. We may have to go down into the deep, the great deep of God's judgments; and our faith may be shaken because we lose sight of the mountains of God's righteousness which are round about us, those attributes which guarantee the fitness of every dealing; but it will cheer us, it will sustain us, if we have stored our minds with the tokens of God's unvaried loving-kindness, and have been in the habit of pondering our daily mercies. Then we can say, "Thou art good, and doest good continually." "Whatsoever time we are afraid, we will trust in Thee." E. Mason.

There is nothing like faith to help at a pinch; faith dissolves doubts as the sun drives away the mists. And the time for believing is always. There are times when some graces may be out of use, but there is no time wherein faith can be said to be so. Wherefore faith must be always in exercise. Faith is the eye, is the mouth, is the hand, and one of these is of

use all the day long. Faith is to see, to receive, to work, or to eat; and a Christian should be seeing, or receiving, or working, or feeding all day long. Let it rain, let it blow, let it thunder, let it lighten, a Christian must still believe. "At what time," said the good man, "I am afraid, I will trust in Thee." Bunyan.

Faith in God clears the mind and dispels fears, so it is the most sure help—*What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee.* It resolves the mind concerning the event, and scatters the multitude of perplexing thoughts that arise. No matter, says faith, though all fail, I know one thing that will not; I have a refuge that all the strength of nature and art cannot break in upon or demolish; a high defence, my rock in whom I trust. The firm belief of and resting on His power and wisdom and love gives a clear, satisfying answer to all doubts and fears. It makes day in the soul, and so chases away those fears that vex us only in the dark, as affrightful fancies do. This is indeed to sanctify God and give Him His own glory, to rest on Him. And it returns us peace and victory over fears and troubles, and persuades us that nothing can separate from His love. Leighton.

3, 4. Notice how beautifully there comes out here the occasion of trust. "What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee." That goes deep down into the realities of life. It is when we are afraid that we trust in God, not in easy times, when things are going smoothly with us. This principle—first fear and only then faith—applies all round the circle of our necessities, weaknesses, sorrows, and sins. And very beautifully, too, these two clauses give us the victory of faith. "In God I have put my trust; I will not fear." He has confidence, and in the strength of that he resolves that he will not yield to fear. The one true antagonist and triumphant rival of all fear is faith, and faith alone. The true way to become brave is to lean on God. That, and that alone, delivers from otherwise reasonable fear. Faith bears in her one hand the gift of outward safety and in her other that of inward peace. A. M.

4. *In God (I give praise for His Word).* The rendering, "In God will I praise His Word," is unmeaning. Such a combination occurs nowhere else. But nothing is more natural, in connection with an avowal of fearless trust in God's mercy and power in great peril, than a thankful reference to His faithful promise of deliverance. The ejaculation included in the parenthesis, with the repetition of the name of God required after it, gives great emphasis to the avowal. This emphasis is greatly increased

at the recurrence of the refrain in vs. 10 and 11, by a repetition of the ejaculation of praise, with the Divine name Jehovah, and followed by the exact echo of the closing line here, "In God do I trust, and am fearless." Immense weight and power are thus gained, in preparation for the thankful sentences that close this beautiful hymn. *De Witt.*

6. The enemies of religion have not anywhere so quick an eye as in observing the ways of such *as seek after God; my remarkers*, David calls them (Psalm 56 : 6), they that scan my ways, as the word is, and will not let the least step pass unexamined. If nothing be found faulty, then their invention works, either forges complete falsehoods, or disguises something that lies open to mistake; or if they can catch hold on any real failing, they aggravate and raise it to the highest. *L.*

8. As in the last Psalm we noticed the sudden transition from sadness to anger, from a tone of weariness and despondency to one of stern indignation, so here we have the contrary. For a moment the Psalmist prays for destruction upon his adversaries; then he turns, with words of touching entreaty, to God. He knows that each day of his wandering, each nook in which he has found shelter, each step that he has taken, every artifice by which he has baffled his foes—all have been numbered by his Heavenly Keeper. Yea, no tear that he has shed, when his eye has been raised to heaven in prayer, has fallen to the ground. He asks God to gather them all in His bottle, and trusts that He will note them in His book. The *bottle* is the skin-bottle which in Eastern lands is used for keeping water, milk, wine, etc. In this he prays God, by a bold figure, to treasure his tears. *P.*—A very bold but expressive metaphor. As the traveller carefully preserves water, milk, or wine in leather bottles or bladders for a journey, so David trusts that God keeps in memory every tear which he sheds. They are precious as memorials of many a sorrowful pleading, many a prayer offered with streaming eyes. *Cook.*

The act of counting implies particular attention. The idea of recollection is expressed by the strong figure which follows, *put my tears into Thy bottle—i.e., preserve them in Thy memory.* The interrogation in the last clause has the force of a direct assertion. *Thy book*, the book of Thy remembrance, another figurative expression for the memory itself. (Compare Mal. 3 : 16.) *A.*—"Thou tellest"—by record in a book; literally, thou dost *book* them. So also bottle Thou my tears, for a permanent record, to keep them ever before Thine eye. Is

it not even so? Precious thought—that the Great Father lets no tear of His child escape His notice or fail from His memory! *C.*

It is the witty observation of one, that God is said in Scripture to have a bag and a bottle, a *bag* for our sins and a *bottle* for our tears; and that we should help to fill this, as we have that. There is an allusion here in the original that cannot be Englished. *Trapp.*—God has a bottle and a book for His people's tears, both those for their sins and those for their afflictions. This intimates that He observes them with compassion and tender concern; He is afflicted in their afflictions, and knows their souls in adversity. As the blood of His saints and their deaths are precious in the sight of the Lord, so are their tears—not one of them shall fall to the ground. *I have seen thy tears* (2 Kings 20 : 5); *I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself* (Jer. 31 : 18). God will comfort His people according to the time wherein He has afflicted them, and give to them to reap in joy, who sowed in tears. What was sown a tear will come up a pearl. *H.*

Tears are here employed as exponents of sorrows and troubles. They have a sort of sacramental meaning, being outward and visible signs of an inward and invisible grief, and sometimes, too, though more rarely, of an inward and visible joy. One class of tears that are treasured up by God are those which are wept in the spiritual conflicts of life. There are the earlier and the latter rains in the life of God in the soul of man. The chief sorrows of a Christian life are those which arise from a sense of sin, and defect, and unbelief, and ingratitude. It is but a poor life which has not its hours of secret self-examination, and its hours, therefore, of secret grief. The tears we shed then are seen by Him who ever seeth in secret, and they are put into His bottle and recorded in His book. Another sort of tears which are equally dear to God are the tears wept over the wickedness of men and the apparent slowness with which the kingdom of God makes its way. Blessed are they that *thus* mourn, for they shall be comforted. *E. Mellor.*

The tears of which David speaks in this Psalm were such as any one may shed in ordinary disappointment or distresses of life. The Psalmist knew that such tears would be dear to God. He uses three metaphors: the arithmetical table; the process of preserving precious wine; the memorandum book. "Thou tellest my flittings, my changes, my flutterings, my agitations." Thou tellest my flittings; put Thou my tears into Thy bottle; are they not (written)

in Thy book ? Things so treated by God cannot be wrong. It would be a very severe creed, and little suited to man and his world, which should exclude tears from the Christian's vocabulary of language. Sorrow is not our normal condition. That graceful verse seems written as for this very end, to show that sorrow is the parenthesis : " Weeping *may* endure for a night." Still sorrow is a very real thing. No one can despise it. And when it comes God sends it so that it shall be felt. And sorrow comes with many missions. Sorrows tell of sin—sin that would else be latent and unknown. Sorrows break up the ground ; the ploughshare passes through the clods to break them. Sorrows draw out graces which were sleeping. Sorrows throw us into the arms of Jesus. But we must deal with our sorrows measuredly. If we are not to despise them, we are not to faint under them. There are tears which, if they do not actually rebel, are nevertheless murmuring tears. They complain of God. There are selfish tears and too protracted tears. The highest exercise of sorrow is to return to duty bravely, throwing into duty more of Christ and more of heaven. J. V.

Faith sets the soul in God, and where is safety if it be not there ? It believes that He fits and rules the affairs of the world with an all-seeing eye and all-moving hand. He orders the march of all armies and the events of battles, and yet thou and thy particular condition slips not out of His view. The very *hairs of thy head are numbered*. Are not all thy steps, and the hazards of them, known to Him, and *all thy desires before him* ? Doth He not number thy wanderings, every weary step thou art driven to, and put thy tears in His bottle ? Thou mayest assure thyself that, however thy matters seem to go, all is contrived to subserve thy good, especially thy chief and highest good. There is a regular motion in them, though the wheels do seem to run cross. *All those things are against me*, said old Jacob, and yet they were all for Him. *Leighton*.—It is possible, if a man puts all his wanderings and tears into the hand of God, that they may be seen at last to end in a plan, man freely contributing his part and God suggesting and guiding. We cannot but think that this shall be one of the occupations of eternity—to read the meaning of the past in the possessions of the future. *Ker*.

9. What doth not prayer overcome and conquer ? What doth not resistance drive back when accompanied by distrust of self and trust in God ? And in what battle can he be conquered who stands in the presence of God with

an earnest resolve to please Him ? " When I cry unto Thee, then shall mine enemies turn back." *Scupoli*.—What a God is this who hearkens to the cry of His children, and in a moment delivers them from the mightiest adversaries ! " *This I know*." This is one of the believer's certainties, his infallible, indisputable verities. " *God is for me* " " If God be for us, who can be against us ? " Who will restrain prayer when it is so potent ? S.

10. " *In God will I praise His Word : in the Lord will I praise His Word*." The first word, *Elohim*, is a name belonging to God as a Judge ; the second word, *Jehovah*, is a name of mercy. I will praise God whether He deal with me in a way of justice or in a way of mercy, when He hath thunder in His voice as well as when He hath honey under His tongue. Oh, how should we praise God, and pleasure ourselves by such a frame ! *Charnock*.

11. The words " in God," repeated here, give a striking prominence to his precious relations to his God. We might translate, " In God will I exult, even in His Word (of promise) ; in God have I put my only trust ; I will not fear ; what can man do against me while God is on my side ? " C.—It is the picture of a human mind at rest, and at rest in view of the Word and the character of the living God, and this, too, in the hour of trial. The language is not that of a man who is at rest because there is nothing in his present condition to annoy and disturb him, and nothing seen in the future to awaken painful apprehensions, but that of a man in the most depressing circumstances, uttered in an hour of peril, when the present was all disaster and the future all gloom ; when earthly confidences failed him, and the vanity of human help was demonstrated, and nothing was left upon which to stay his spirit but simple confidence in God. *E. Mason*.—This triumphant word, so expressive of a holy magnanimity, the apostle puts into the mouth of every true believer, whom he makes a Christian hero (Heb. 13 : 6). We may each of us boldly say, *The Lord is my Helper*, and then *I will not fear what man shall do unto me* ; for he has no power but what he has given him from above. H.

12. **Thy vows are upon me.** David, when overwhelmed by afflictions and oppressed by dangers, often established his heart with the reflection that the vows of his God were upon him. There is no privilege, no exaltation of blessedness, comparable with that by which a sinner is permitted to avouch the Lord to be his God. Everything of good, whether for this

world or that which is to come, is embraced in the compendious declaration, I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee. The vow corresponds to this promise, and presents the man as an oblation to the Lord, holy and acceptable through Jesus Christ. It is an exercise of faith which strengthens faith. *Thornicell.*

Vows made in his trouble David does not lightly forget, nor should we. We voluntarily made them, let us cheerfully keep them. All professed Christians are men under vows, but especially those who in hours of dire distress have rededicated themselves unto the Lord. S.—It ought to be the matter of our consideration and joy that *the vows of God are upon us*; our baptismal vows, renewed at the Lord's table, our occasional vows under convictions, under corrections, by these we are bound to live to God. H.

Psalms of thanksgiving are not all reserved for the end of the book. Even in those which read like the very sobs of a broken heart there is ever present some tone of grateful acknowledgment of God's mercy. He sends us sorrow, and He wills that we should weep; but they should be tears like David's, who, at the lowest point of his fortunes, when he plaintively besought God, "Put Thou my tears into Thy bottle," could say in the same breath, "Thy vows are upon me, O God; I will render praises unto Thee." God works on our souls that we may have the consciousness of sin, and He wills that we should come with broken and contrite hearts, and like the King of Israel wail out our confessions and supplications—"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness." But, like him, we should even in our

lowliest abasement, when our hearts are bruised, be able to say along with our contrition, "Open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise." Our sorrows are never so great that they hide our mercies. The sky is never covered with clouds, so that neither sun nor stars appear for many days. And in every Christian heart the low tones of lamentation and confession are blended with grateful praise. A. M.

13. *Thou hast delivered my soul from death; wilt Thou not deliver my feet from falling?* Here, as in the beggar's Psalm (chap. 85), we are emboldened to ask other benefits by the remembrance of what the Lord has already done for us. If God has saved our souls from perdition, may we not surely trust the same grace to keep us from falling? *Pierson.*—He gratefully refers, in conclusion, to the personal experiences which constrained him thus to "offer thank-offerings" unto God. His life had been preserved and his steps made firm, so that he might still honor God in his further life, that he might continue to "walk before God in the light of the living." B.

Nothing raises the price of a blessing like its removal; whereas it was its continuance which should have taught us its value. There are three requisitions to the proper enjoyment of earthly blessings—a thankful reflection on the goodness of the Giver, a deep sense of our unworthiness, a recollection of the uncertainty of long possessing them. The first should make us grateful, the second humble, and the third moderate. *Hannah More.*

PSALM LVII.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN ; SET TO AL-TASHHETH. A PSALM OF DAVID : MIGHTAM : WHEN HE FLED FROM SAUL, IN THE CAVE.

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| <p>1 BE merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me ;
For my soul taketh refuge in thee :
Yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I take refuge,
Until <i>these</i> calamities be overpast.</p> <p>2 I will cry unto God Most High ;
Unto God that performeth <i>all things</i> for me.</p> <p>3 He shall send from heaven, and save me,
When he that would swallow me up reproacheth ;
God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.</p> <p>4 My soul is among lions ;
I lie among them that are set on fire,
Even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows,
And their tongue a sharp sword.</p> <p>5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens ;
Let thy glory be above all the earth.</p> | <p>6 They have prepared a net for my steps ;
My soul is bowed down :
They have digged a pit before me ;
They are fallen into the midst thereof themselves. [Selah</p> <p>7 My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed :
I will sing, yea, I will sing praises.</p> <p>8 Awake up, my glory ; awake, psaltery and harp :
I myself will awake right early.</p> <p>9 I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the peoples :
I will sing praises unto thee among the nations.</p> <p>10 For thy mercy is great unto the heavens,
And thy truth unto the skies.</p> <p>11 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens ;
Let thy glory be above all the earth.</p> |
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THIS Psalm also belongs to the time of David's persecution by Saul. The cave mentioned is probably the cave of Adullam, to which he made escape from the sharp pursuit of Saul (1 Sam. 22), rather than the cave in the wilderness of Engedi, where later on he sojourned for a time (1 Sam. 24). There are various resemblances in style and expression in this group of Psalms that indicate the same time and authorship. *De Witt.*

This Psalm is in many respects like the last, and, like that, was probably written by David. Both Psalms open with the same cry to God for mercy ; both are written in circumstances of no common peril ; both are full of the same lofty trust in God, and courage in the midst of danger, and of the same joy and thankfulness in the assurance of deliverance. Both have even the same peculiar and characteristic expression, by which the enemy is described as one ready to swallow up the Psalmist, and both have a double refrain at the conclusion of the two principal divisions of the Psalm. But this Psalm is written in a still more triumphant strain of holy joy than the last, and closes with a shout of exultation. P.—A refrain verse of grand purport closes the first and last

strophes. In the first courageous resignation predominates ; in the second assurance of victory, which breaks out beforehand into strains of praise. D.

TITLE. The cave. There was a cave in the darkened cool of which David and his men were hid. Such caves in Palestine and the East are frequently enlarged by human hands, and so capacious that they accommodate hundreds of people. This song of complaint was written during the hours of suspense which David spent there, to wait until the calamity was overpast (v. 2) ; in which he only gradually gains a stout heart (v. 8). His life was really suspended by a hair, if Saul or any of his attendants had espied him ! *Tholuck.*

1. Perhaps there is nothing more remarkable in the Psalms than this ever-recurring expression of a tender personal affection on the part of the sacred poets to God. There is no parallel to this in the whole range of heathen literature. P.

Be merciful, be merciful. The repetition notes both the extremity of the danger and the ardency of the supplicant. *Mercy ! Mercy ! Nothing but mercy,* and that exerting itself in any extraordinary way, can now save him from ruin. He pleads his reliance upon God

as an argument to move mercy. "*My soul trusteth in Thee.*" He pleads former experiences of his help in past distresses as an argument encouraging hope under the present strait (v. 2). *Flavel.*

In the past he has sheltered his soul in God, but no past act of faith can avail for present distresses. It must be perpetually renewed. The past deliverances should make the present confidence more easy; and the true use of all earlier exercises of trust is to prepare for the resolve that we will still rely on the help we have so often proved. "I have trusted in Thee" should ever be followed by, "And in the shadow of Thy wings will I trust." A. M.

The shadow of God's wings is the protection of His sweet and gentle love; and the shade of His wings is the refreshing solace associated with this protection. To this shade the poet now as ever betakes himself, until the danger from the abyss that threatens him be overpast. Not that he would then no longer require the Divine protection; but now he feels specially in need of it, that he may be able to endure the sorrows hovering over him undauntedly. D.

The hiding-places of men are discovered by affliction. As one has aptly said, "Our refuges are like the nests of birds; in summer they are hidden among the green leaves, but in winter they are seen among the naked branches." Troubles drive each one to his refuge, and each has his little retreat, his shrine and his idol, which he seeks at such times. And the child of God has his refuge and goes into it. Above the raging of the water floods, when all around is consternation, he hears the voice, as of a trumpet, saying from the bulwarks: "Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut the doors about thee; hide thyself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast" (Isa. 26:20). And emerging from the waves, he responds: "In the shadow of Thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast." J. W. A.

Suffering first, satisfaction afterward. The fruit of power and peace, gathered out of trial, comes not all at once, but gradually. Ripening under a clouded sky, it ripens slowly. You are not to be discouraged by that. Almost all God's spiritual harvests come to maturity in the same silent way. That secret and gracious work of the Spirit, whatever it is, which brings tranquillity out of inward tumult, clear sightedness out of sorrow, and sympathy for others out of your own heartache, goes on not by swift transformations of the inner man, or sudden

reactions, but little by little. The promise is a promise made to trust, not to be fulfilled at once, but "in due season." F. D. H.

2. I will cry. Faith is never dumb. We pray because we believe. We exercise by faith the spirit of adoption whereby we cry. He says not I do cry, or I have cried, but I will cry, and this resolution may stand with all of us until we pass through the gates of pearl; for while we are here below we shall still have need to cry. S.

There are higher things than knowledge in the world; there are living energies; and in the moral world certainly it is not knowledge but aspiration that is the moving power, and the wing of aspiration is prayer. How far with regard to any special matter, not irrevocably fixed in the Divine concatenation of possibilities, our petition may prevail, we never can tell; but this we do know, that the most natural and the most effectual means of keeping our own noblest nature in harmony with the source of all vital nobleness is to hold high emotional communion with that source, and to plant ourselves humbly in that attitude of devout receptiveness which is the one becoming attitude in the created toward the Creator. J. S. Blackie.

The Psalmist goes on to fulfil his resolve. He takes refuge by prayer in God, whose absolute elevation above all creatures and circumstances is the ground of his hope, whose faithful might will accomplish its design and complete His servant's lot. "I will call to God Most High; to God, who perfects (His purpose) for me." And then assured hope gleams upon his soul, and though the storm-clouds hang low and black as ever, they are touched with light. "He will send from heaven and save me." A. M.

God, that performeth all things for me. Heb., *that performeth* (or *perfecteth*, or *finisheth*, as this word is rendered, Psalm 138:8—*i.e.*, will certainly perform or finish), *for*, or *toward*, or *concerning me*. God's favors already received are a pledge that He will complete His work of love "*upon me.*" The beginning is the earnest of the completion. His word is a guarantee for the performance of "all things" that I need. *Fausset.*—"He performeth" or *perfecteth* all that He hath promised; engageth Himself to perform what He hath begun to do, or what is yet to be performed. *Pool.*—To a happy issue the Lord hath brought all his doubtful and difficult matters before; and this gives him encouragement that He will still be gracious, and perfect that which concerneth him now, as he speaks (Psalm

138 : 8), "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." *Flavel*.

David, even when he fled from Saul, looks upon God as having *performed all things for him*. The word is, he hath *perfected all things*; and it is observable that David uses the same expression of praising God here when he was in the cave, hiding himself to save his life, as he did when he triumphed over his enemies (Psalms 6; 108). *Burroughs*.—He has cogent reason for praying, for he sees God performing. The believer waits and God works. The Lord has undertaken for us, and He will go through with His covenant engagements. Our translators have very properly inserted the words "all things," for there is a blank in the Hebrew, as if it were a *carte blanche*, and you might write therein that the Lord would finish anything and everything which He has begun. Whatsoever the Lord takes in hand He will accomplish; hence past mercies are guarantees for the future, and admirable reasons for continuing to cry unto Him. S.

3. "God will send forth from heaven His mercy and His truth" is bold personification, as if mercy and truth were the very messengers of His power, the mighty agents, angels of deliverance to His imperilled servants. C.

4. *My soul (is) in the midst of lions; I will lie down (among) burning ones, sons of man, (whose) teeth (are) spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword*. By his soul he means himself, or rather his endangered life. *Lions*, as often elsewhere, mean ferocious enemies. The form of the verb which follows is the one denoting fixed determination—"Though surrounded by lions, I will fearlessly lie down," etc. *Among* or *upon* them. *Burning* may possibly refer to *lions* and mean *raging*; but the indefinite application is more natural. *Sons of man* is added to show that what precedes is to be figuratively understood; but in the very next clause the writer relapses into language still more highly metaphorical. In likening their teeth to swords he presents the double image of a wild beast and a warrior. The mention of the tongue has reference, no doubt, to the slander and abuse which entered so largely into the Sauline persecutions. A.

It is the spirit that moves the tongue; and what horrors the sword of the tongue achieves! We read of the froward tongue, the lying tongue, the false tongue, the flattering tongue, the crafty tongue, the tongue "as a devouring fire," "the perverse tongue that falls into mischief." And again, the wise man tells us there is "the power of life and death in the tongue."

The spirit must be right! The tongue is the index of the heart. How many homes have been cursed, how many dear friends divided through the tongue! *Anon*.

5. **Be Thou exalted**—*i.e.*, manifest Thy glory and Thy majesty in the exercise of Thy universal dominion both in heaven and in earth. For this manifestation David prays; that this will be he rests assured, and this is his comfort when enemies assail. P.

7-9. If the former part may be regarded as the evening song of confidence, this is the morning hymn of thankfulness. He lay down in peace among lions; he awakes to praise. He calls upon his soul to shake off slumber; he invokes the chords of his harp to arouse from its chamber the sleeping dawn. Like a mightier than himself, he will rise a great while before day, and the clear notes of the rude lyre, his companion in all his wanderings, will summon the morning to add its silent speech to His praise. But a still loftier thought inspires him. This hunted solitary not only knows that his deliverance is certain, but he has already the consciousness of a world-wide vocation, and anticipates that the story of his sorrow and his trust, with the music of his Psalms, belong to the world, and will flow over the barriers of his own generation and of his own land into the whole earth. A. M.

The song is the language of love. When you sing your faith it is a power in you. The more you can sing it the more love it has, and the more love it has the more of character it represents. The ancient creeds were liturgies, they were to be sung. The modern Christian life is to be an anthem incarnate, an oratorio of the soul, a living hymn. Blossom and fruit of Christian character follow the bud of the living song of a Christian experience. It is not strange that Bunyan puts songs into the mouths of his pilgrims as they are borne across the last river to the golden beach. You are to set your life to music, you are to sing your Christianity. If your life is an epic, its parts are still to be set to music. If your life is a simple lyric, it is still to be set to music. Your Christian life begins by obedience to certain precise, clear, iron statutes: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbor as thyself. Your life thus beginning goes on chanting the beatitudes and melody of increasing sweetness and harmony of greater power, till at last it ends in the new song of praise and glory to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb forever and

ever. The statutes have become songs. *C. F. Thwing.*

7. *Fixed (is) my heart, O God, fixed (is) my heart; I will sing and play.* The repetition adds solemnity and force to the declaration. *Fixed*—i.e., firmly resolved and proof against all fear. A.—If it be refined from creature-love and self-love, spirituality and love of God will fix the heart, and then shall it be fit to praise, which an unstable, uncomposed heart can never be any more than an instrument can be harmonious and fit to play on that hath loose pins, still slipping and letting down the strings, pins that never fasten. And thus are the most; they cannot fix to Divine thoughts, to consider God, to behold and admire His excellency and goodness, and His free love. Oh, that happy word of David, worthy to be repeated, when shall we say it? *O God, my heart is fixed; well might he add, I will sing and give praise. Leighton.*

Let us clearly understand that all special occasions in the life of church or of individual—church services, stated preaching, social meetings, closet communing, sacraments—are aimed directly at our *ordinary* life; are designed to help us live that better. We are led up to these Pisgahs and Hermons of spiritual vision to the end that we may carry the power of these visions into life's common routine, to sanctify and to elevate that. These things are intended to foster in us that constantly prepared, fixed heart of which David here sings; the heart that shall be prepared for praise, and for trust, and for worship not only while sitting in heavenly places, but also among lions, among them that are set on fire; when the net has been prepared for the steps, and the soul is bowed down amid the fret and worry of life, and on the dead level of daily duty and care. Christ, with all His power and sweetness and refreshing, is willing to come down into our *common* life; to teach us how to make our "common task" "bring us daily nearer God." When He shall thus abide with us and we with Him all our life, whether commonplace or sublime, will get its character from that abiding; business, domestic life, pleasure—all will fall into the key of His spirit, and he who thus walks with Him will know, in the ready response of every detail of his life to Christ's touch, what the Psalmist meant when he said, "My heart is prepared." V.

8. **Awake, my glory.** The faculty of speech is one of the best gifts of God's mercy to man. It is an essential element of his well-being. It gives scope and energy to the affections, and enables them to call forth kindred

affections from others. It renders the increase of knowledge possible, and advances the cause of truth by enabling each individual to pour his discoveries into the common stock, and to share in those of others in return. It sharpens the faculties by the play of intellects one on the other, and enriches all minds by the mutual interchange of ideas. It unlocks the gates of sympathy, of compassion, affection, and charity, and thus gives liberty to the purest happiness of our nature. It was, therefore, that the heathen, both poets and philosophers, would define man by the gift of speech as his distinguishing quality, and that the tongue, in Scripture, is called the glory of man. "Awake up, my glory." *Bishop J. Jackson.*

As the tongue is the glory of a man, so the glory of the tongue is to glorify God. Praise is the glory of all other uses to which the tongue is employed; and the tongue is, in the body, that "temple of the Holy Ghost," what the silver trumpet was in the Temple of Solomon—to sound the high praises of God and express the raised affections of our souls. Meditation cannot have a better help than in singing. The slow movement of the time gives room for the mind to compass the full sense of the matter, and while the tongue is making the *pause*, the heart may make the *elevation*. In short, it is adapted and suited to all circumstances, as appears from the Psalms composed upon all occasions and subjects, doctrinal, prophetic, hortatory, and historical; of praise and prayer, of grief and joy, in the penitential and complaining, in the triumphal and rejoicing; as if singing of Psalms could stand for everything we enjoy in the house of God. *B. Grosvenor.*

8. *I will wake the morning dawn.* The figure is at once bold and beautiful. My song shall itself awake the morning. P.—Strictly translated, this clause contains a bold but beautiful poetical conception, that of awakening the dawn instead of being awakened by it—in other words, preventing or anticipating it by early praises. We thus obtain the same sense, in a far more striking form, than is expressed by the inexact and prosaic version, *I will awake early.* A.

9. As with thanksgiving we are to make our requests known unto God, so thanksgiving is to be the prevailing and the ultimate note of our life. At last all our thoughts and petitions will end in praise. *Saphir.*—Praise is our best preparation for usefulness, and usefulness in its reflex influence is the secret of all true happiness. We fail to bring the fruit of righteousness to perfection because there is not enough

of the sunshine of praise to God and love for others in our souls to ripen it. H. J. V.

The people—the nations. The Hebrew Church was neither called nor qualified to be a missionary society, but it never ceased to desire and hope for the conversion of the nations. This is seen in those passages in which the Psalmists betray a consciousness that they shall one day have all the world for auditors. How boldly does David exclaim, “*I will sing unto Thee among the nations*”! In the same spirit a later Psalmist summons the Church to lift up her voice, so that all the nations may hear her recital of the Lord’s mighty acts: “Oh, give thanks unto the Lord; call upon His name; make known His deeds among the people.” The full import of this class of texts is often hidden from the English reader by the circumstance that our translators have hardly ever used the word *people* in its plural form. Twice in the Revelation they venture to write *peoples*; everywhere else the singular form has to do duty for both numbers; so that in not a few passages the sense is greatly obscured to those who have no access either to the original or to other versions. In the Psalms in particular the mention of the Gentiles is more frequent than the English reader is made aware of. It is to be observed, moreover, that in addition to this strain of indirect prediction the conversion of the world is articulately celebrated in many glorious Psalms. Indeed, so numerous are these, and so generally distributed over the centuries between David and Ezra, that it would seem that at no time during the long history of

inspired Psalmody did the Spirit cease to indite new songs in which the children of Zion might give utterance to their world-embracing hopes. W. Binnie.

10, 11. It is in his heart to let all the people of the wide world know how faithful and true is his God, and how rich in mercy to all who call upon Him. To say “mercy and truth are great even to the heavens, reaching unto the clouds,” labors to set forth the exceeding greatness and excellent glory of these moral qualities. How simple the conception, yet how sublime! Thus, in the highest strain of poetic beauty, and with imagery magnificently grand, does the Psalmist give the testimony of his grateful heart to the mercy and the power shown him of God in his deliverance from his enemies, and in his final triumph in reaching the throne of Israel. C.

10. God’s mercy is so great that it forgives great sins to great sinners after great lengths of time, and then gives great favors and great privileges, and raises us up to great enjoyments in the great heaven of the great God. As John Bunyan well saith, “It must be great mercy, or no mercy; for little mercy will never serve my turn.” S.

11. In the refrain verse, which differs only in one letter from v. 6, the Psalm reverts back to prayer. Greater words of prayer than these never came from human lips. Heaven and earth have as they imply a mutually interwoven history, and the blessed, glorious end of this is in the sunrise of the Divine glory over both. Delitzsch.

PSALM LVIII.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN ; SET TO AL-TASHHETH. A PSALM OF DAVID : MIGHTAM.

1 Do ye indeed in silence speak righteousness ?

Do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men ?

2 Nay, in heart ye work wickedness ;

Ye weigh out the violence of your hands in the earth.

3 The wicked are estranged from the womb :

They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.

4 Their poison is like the poison of a serpent :

They are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear ;

5 Which hearkeneth not to the voice of charmers,

Charming never so wisely.

6 Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth :

Break out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD.

7 Let them melt away as water that runneth apace :

When he aimeth his arrows, let them be as though they were cut off.

8 *Let them be* as a snail which melteth and passeth away :

Like the untimely birth of a woman, that hath not seen the sun.

9 Before your pots can feel the thorns,

He shall take them away with a whirlwind, the green and the burning alike.

10 The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance :

He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.

11 So that men shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous :

Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.

A PSALM of stern reproof, such as a king might address to unrighteous judges, the great and permanent evil of Oriental despotisms. It belongs probably to the first year of David's reign ; the style is rugged and obscure, the tone solemn and earnest, such as might well become a prince succeeding to a period of anarchy and turbulence. He describes the wickedness as so great, so thoroughly identified with the nature of the oppressors, as to leave no hope of improvement, no resource but prayer for their extirpation. The obscurity of the language points to an early date, nor is there any sufficient reason for rejecting the inscription found in all the old versions. *Cook.*

The incomparable boldness of the language does not warrant us to deny it to David. In no Psalm are there found together within a similar brief space so many transcendent figures. To a certain extent, however, Psalms 64 and 140 are a guarantee that David speaks here. These three Psalms, whose similar closing verses of themselves challenge comparison, show that the same David who usually writes so elegantly, tenderly, and transparently can soar in a great variety of transitions to a sublimity in which his language, especially where it implores

(58 : 7) or announces (140 : 10) God's judgment, rolls on like deep thunder through a gloomy mass of dark clouds. D.

This Psalm is a bold protest against unrighteous judges. It opens with an indignant expostulation on their deliberate perversion of justice, while they pretend to uphold it. It lays bare their character and that of those whom they favor as men thoroughly, habitually, by their very nature corrupt. And finally, because they are thus beyond all hope of correction or amendment, it calls upon God to rob them of their power and to bring all their counsels to nought. The Psalm abounds in bold and striking images, and is remarkable for a nervous force of expression. The title ascribes it to David, but without assigning it to any particular occasion in his life. Various guesses have been made as to the time of its composition, but the Psalm furnishes us with no data for any certain or even probable conclusion. It consists of three principal divisions : The forcible picture of unrighteousness in the seat of judgment (vs. 1-5) ; the swift punishment which is about to overtake these unjust judges, and for which the Psalmist prays (vs. 6-9) ; lastly, the joy of those who shall behold their overthrow, and

who shall acknowledge that, however the name of justice may have been profaned by human judges who abuse their office, there is, nevertheless, a righteous Judge in the earth (vs. 10, 11). P.

1. The interrogation expresses wonder, as at something scarcely creditable. Can it be so? Is it possible? Are you really silent, you whose very office is to speak for God and against the sins of men? That the speaking here meant is judicial speaking appears from the more specific parallel expression. The address to them as *sons of man* reminds them of their own dependence and responsibility. A.—**In silence.** They are *dumb* when they ought to speak, as afterward they are said to be *deaf* when they ought to hear. P.

Do ye judge uprightly. He who is, or wishes to be, righteous in his Saviour's righteousness is always the man who is also the most righteous in the discharge of all the duties of this present life. The question, therefore, takes an easy and necessary transit. In this very place, at this very moment, are you honest—honest to God and to your own souls in the work in which you are engaged? You have received the stewardship of many talents; where is the capital, and where is the interest ready to be given back to the Proprietor when He comes? "Are your minds set upon righteousness, O ye sons of man?" J. V.

2. *Nay, in heart iniquities ye practise; in the land the violence of your hands ye weigh.* Not contented with neglecting their official functions, they were guilty of positive injustice. The Hebrew for *iniquities* denotes various acts of injustice. The sense of weighing agrees well with the favorite idea of the scales of justice, which is found not only in the classics but in Scripture. The meaning, then, is that these wicked rulers, instead of weighing out justice to their subjects, weighed out, administered, dispensed the most violent injustice, and that, too, devised and practised by themselves. A.—So far from sustaining justice and right, they wrought wickedness, and this *with the heart*, through sympathy with wrong. How could the Lord endure that the courts of justice should themselves perpetrate monstrous iniquity in His own land! The fact gives the Psalmist a painfully keen sense of the terrible depravity of human hearts, as we see in the next verse. C.

3. Abandoning the form of address, he goes on to give a further description of their character in the third person. The object here is clearly not to insist upon the general truth of

an innate depravity, but rather to mark the special character of these wicked men as men whose *whole life* has been one continuous, unchecked career of wickedness—bold, habitual, hardened transgressors, whose maturity in vice is what might be expected from their early depravity. P.

Go astray—speaking lies. Children can neither go nor speak as soon as born, but their first speaking is lying, and their first going is straying; yea, the first step they are able to take is a step out of the way. *Caryl.*—No sin can call Satan father like to lying. This sin of forging and lying is from the devil more than any; tastes of the devil more than any. Hence the very first depravation of our nature came in by lying, and our nature doth taste much still of this old block to be given to lying, the devil also breathing into us a strong breath to stir us up to lying. A liar, then, is as like the devil as ever he can look; as unlike to God as ever he can be. *R. Capel.*

As soon as they be born. This is saying in a very strong way that the race take to sinning as early as they can, and sin with their whole heart in it. The last words of the verse, "speaking lies," fortunately guard us against imputing to David or to the inditing Spirit the idea that infants do in fact begin to sin from their very birth. Nothing in this passage justifies us in assuming that there is sin where there is no evidence of thought, of knowledge of God and duty, or of voluntary moral choice. C.

4, 5. Their wickedness is desperate, for they are like the adder, which the subtlest charmer cannot tame. The adder is mentioned as peculiarly dangerous. P.—The "*adder*," or "*asp*," is the *haje naja*, or *cobra* of Egypt, according to Cuvier. The hearing of all the serpent tribes is imperfect, as all are destitute of a tympanic cavity and of external openings to the ear. The "*deaf adder*" is not a particular species. The point of the rebuke is, the *pathen*, or "*adder*," here in question *could* hear in some degree, but *would* not; just as the unrighteous judges or persecutors of David could hear with their outward ears such appeals as he makes in vs. 1, 2, but would not. The charmer usually could charm the serpent by shrill sounds, either of his voice or of the flute, the serpent's comparative deafness rendering it the more amenable to those sounds which it could hear. But exceptional cases occurred of a "*deaf adder*" which was *deaf* only in the sense that it refused to hear or to be acted on. *Fausset.*

The poison or virus of wickedness in man may be compared with the poison of the serpent in the points of its power of mischief and of its terrible malignity, yet with no assumption of moral quality in the serpent. The comparison cannot "go on all fours." We need not suppose that in David's view man's poison of depravity runs in his blood—belongs to his physical nature in precisely the same sense as in the serpent's. C.

6. There is an abrupt change in the image employed. As these men are incorrigible in their wickedness, as they cannot be tamed, the Psalmist prays God to destroy their power for mischief; but instead of continuing the figure of the serpent-charmer, who robs the serpent of his poison, he suddenly represents them as young lions, whose teeth he would see broken that they may no longer devour.

7. Then in a series of bold figures he draws further the picture of the destruction which he would fain see come upon them. The first is taken from water running away, and so wasted and lost (comp. 2 Sam. 14 : 14); the next from arrows shot, but with their points broken off and blunted, so that they fail to inflict a wound. P.

8. *As a snail melts, let him go.* The idea of speedy and entire disappearance is still more strongly expressed here. The meaning of the word translated *snail* rests upon rabbinical tradition and a doubtful etymology. A.—The allusion is to the slimy trail which the snail leaves behind it, so that *it seems* to waste away. Evidently this is nothing more than a poetical hyperbole. P.—Let his march be like the snail's crawl—the point of the figure being the melting away of substance and power—according to the current notion that the snail used himself up by locomotion, perhaps depositing the slime of his body so as to exhaust the body itself. C.

9. The general sense of this difficult verse seems to be this: As a sudden whirlwind in the desert sweeps away the thorns which have been gathered for cooking almost as soon as they have been set on fire, and before the caldron has grown hot, so shall the wicked and all their yet incomplete designs be swept away by the wrath of God. P.—*Feel*, perceive the heat. *The thorn*, used as fuel, kindles quickly and immediately burns out, so that this comparison suggests the idea of a very sudden change. The verse may be paraphrased: "Before the seething pot of your contrivances begins to feel the

quickly kindled heat which you apply to it, the tempest of Divine wrath carries you away, whether your mess be cooked or raw." A.—Here we must think of cooking done in the open air, and the pots heated with the thorn-bush for fuel. Sudden gusts of wind sweep the fuel away before any heat is felt. So let the concocting of wicked schemes be suddenly blasted by the breath of the Almighty! Before your pot shall feel the heat of the thorn-fire, let Him (God) sweep the fuel, green or dry, away with His whirlwind. C.

10. A broad and vital distinction is to be made between *desire for the gratification of personal vengeance* and *zeal for the vindication of the glory of God*. "The glory of God" includes necessarily the real good of the offender and the well-being of society. Desire for *retaliation* is always wrong; desire for *retribution* may be in the highest degree praiseworthy. For personal motives only can I desire retaliation upon the wrong-doer; but for motives most disinterested and noble I may desire retribution. R. A. Bertram.

11. "*Verily*," in very deed, "*there is a reward for the righteous*." If nothing else be true this is. The godly are not forsaken and given over to their enemies; the wicked are not to have the best of it, truth and goodness are recompensed in the long run. "*Verily He is a God that judgeth in the earth*." All men shall be forced by the sight of the final judgment to see that there is a God, and that He is the righteous Ruler of the universe. Two things will come out clearly after all—there is a God and there is a reward for the righteous. Time will remove doubts, solve difficulties, and reveal secrets; meanwhile, faith's foreseeing eye discerns the truth even now, and is glad. S.

These manifestations of God's righteous retribution will be so clear that the righteous cannot mistake His hand or His heart either. They will rejoice most assuredly, and most righteously, too; for ought they not to sympathize with righteousness, to mourn over abounding and mischievous wickedness, and be glad when God puts forth his strong arm to suppress it? Indeed they will have occasion to say, "Of a truth, there is a God! Most certainly He will reward the righteous"—the suffering and oppressed ones who stand with Him in right doing and in the love of righteousness. In His own time He will judge the earth and bring the wicked to an exemplary and righteous doom! C.

PSALM LIX.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN ; SET TO AL-TASHHETH. A PSALM OF DAVID : MIGHTAM ; WHEN SAUL SENT, AND THEY WATCHED THE HOUSE TO KILL HIM.

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| <p>1 DELIVER me from mine enemies, O my God :
Set me on high from them that rise up against me.</p> <p>2 Deliver me from the workers of iniquity,
And save me from the bloodthirsty men.</p> <p>3 For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul ;
The mighty gather themselves together against me :
Not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O LORD.</p> <p>4 They run and prepare themselves without <i>my</i> fault :
Awake thou to help me, and behold.</p> <p>5 Even thou, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel,
Arise to visit all the heathen :
Be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. [Selah]</p> <p>6 They return at evening, they make a noise like a dog,
And go round about the city.</p> <p>7 Behold, they belch out with their mouth ;
Swords are in their lips :
For who, <i>say they</i>, doth hear ?</p> <p>8 But thou, O LORD, shalt laugh at them ;
Thou shalt have all the heathen in derision.</p> <p>9 O my strength, I will wait upon thee :
For God is my high tower.</p> | <p>10 The God of my mercy shall prevent me :
God shall let me see <i>my desire</i> upon mine enemies.</p> <p>11 Slay them not, lest my people forget :
Scatter them by thy power, and bring them down, O Lord our shield.</p> <p>12 <i>For</i> the sin of their mouth, <i>and</i> the words of their lips,
Let them even be taken in their pride,
And for cursing and lying which they speak.</p> <p>13 Consume them in wrath, consume them, that they be no more :
That men may know that God ruleth in Jacob,
Unto the ends of the earth. [Selah]</p> <p>14 And at evening let them return, let them make a noise like a dog,
And go round about the city.</p> <p>15 They shall wander up and down for meat,
And tarry all night if they be not satisfied.</p> <p>16 But I will sing of thy strength ;
Yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning :
For thou hast been my high tower,
And a refuge in the day of my distress.</p> <p>17 Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing praises :
For God is my high tower, the God of my mercy.</p> |
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THIS Psalm, which in tone, coloring, and expression has much in common with the four preceding Psalms, is said in the title to have been composed by David when Saul's emissaries watched him in his own house. It is quite consistent with David's character that he should commemorate in his songs such a crisis in his life. But the internal evidence lends little confirmation to the accuracy of the title. All that seems certain is that the Psalm was called forth by some attack upon the life of its author. P.

1, 2. The Psalm begins abruptly with a passionate cry for help, which is repeated four times, thus bringing most vividly before us the extremity of the danger and the persistency of the suppliant's trust. The peculiar tenderness and closeness of his relation to his heavenly

Friend which is so characteristic of David's Psalms, and which they were almost the first to express, breathes through the name by which he invokes help, "my God." A. M.—"My God" is such a plea as infinitely overbalances all other things. He has engaged Himself to do His people good ; and it is time for Him to work when the enemy exalts himself. We may plead God's promise and the enemies' power, too ; both are a ground of hope to a believer in Jesus. *John Hill.*

3, 4. He pleads his own innocence, not as to God—he was never backward to own himself guilty before Him—but as to his persecutors ; what they charged him with was utterly false, nor had he ever said or done anything to deserve such treatment from them. "*Not for my*

transgression, nor for my sin, O Lord, Thou knowest, who knowest all things." And again (v. 4), *Without my fault.* Though our innocency will not secure us from troubles, yet it will greatly support and comfort us under our troubles. The testimony of our conscience for us, that we have behaved ourselves well toward those that behave themselves ill toward us, will be very much our rejoicing in the day of evil. If we are conscious to ourselves of our innocency, we may with humble confidence appeal to God and beg of Him to plead our injured cause, which He will do in due time. H.

6. In bringing their secret plans to bear, they are represented as hungry dogs prowling about the city in the darkness for prey; ranging, each with his own object, but in one common cause. *W. H. Tucker.*—The masterless dogs are countless, as they have been from the earliest times in Eastern towns. They are hateful-looking, yellow beasts, with sharp muzzles. The prophet vividly describes their mode of life by day, as I often noticed it: "They are dumb; they do not bark, they dream, and lie about and like to sleep" (Isa. 56:10). After sunset, however, they are active enough, and swarm through the streets, breaking the quiet of the night with their dissonant noise. At the same time they act like sanitary police. Whatever is unclean, useless, or unholy according to Jewish (or Eastern) ideas, is thrown out on the streets. The dogs come and eat all this up. *Furrer's Palaestina.*

9. How weak soever the believer finds himself, and how powerful soever he perceives his enemy to be, it is all one to him; he hath no more to do but to put faith on work, and to wait till God works. "*I will wait upon Thee,*" saith he to the Lord, "*for God is my defence.*" *Dickson.*

9, 17. These two parallel verses are a kind of refrain coming in at the close of each division of the Psalm. The first stands at the end of a picture of the Psalmist's trouble and danger, and makes the transition to the second part, which is mainly a prayer for deliverance, and finishes with the refrain altered and enlarged. The cry of the suppliant was to God, his strength and defence; the song of the saved is to the God of his mercy. The experiences of life have brought out more fully the love and tender pity of God. When our troubles are past, and their meaning is plainer, we shall be able to look back on them all as the mercies of the God of our mercy. A. M.

10. Read first clause, "My God with His lovingkindness shall meet me." *Am. Com.*—

The God of my mercy shall meet me with the blessings of His goodness and the gifts of His mercy, prevent my fears, and be better to me than my own expectations. It is very comfortable to us to eye God not only as the God of mercy, but as the God of *our* mercy, the Author of all good in us, and the Giver of all good to us. Whatever mercy there is in God, it is laid up for us, and is ready to be laid out upon us. Justly does the Psalmist call God's mercy *his mercy*, for all the blessings of the new covenant are called *the sure mercies of David* (Isa. 55:3); and they are *sure to all the seed.* H.

11. Bring them down. He would have them so brought down and consumed in their strength, dignity, command, wealth, riches, that made them proud, that they never be able any more to oppose God, hurt His people, trample upon religion and His Church; he would have them live. *W. Nicholson.*

14. This verse repeats what was said in v. 6, but the language of v. 15 shows plainly that a different turn is given here to the expression. There, the conduct of his enemies is described; here, their punishment. They came about him like dogs; like dogs shall they be treated. Their sin becomes its own curse. They come with their mouth wide open, ready to devour, but they shall find nothing to satisfy their hunger; they shall remain lean, hungry, savage, as they came. P.

17. The refrain, which occurs twice in the Psalm, witnesses to the growth of his faith even while he sings. At first he could only say in patient expectance (v. 9), "My strength! I will wait upon Thee, for God is my fortress." But at the end his mood is higher, his soul has caught fire as it revolves, and his last words are a triumphant amplification of his earlier trust—"My strength! unto Thee will I sing praises; for God is my high tower, the God of my mercy." A. M.

Strength—mercy. He joins these two attributes, "*strength*" and "*mercy*," very well; for take away *strength* from Him, and He cannot; remove mercy, and He will not protect; both must go together in any one that will defend; *power*, that he can—*mercy*, that he will; otherwise 'tis but in vain to hope for help from him. David found God to be both, and for both he extols Him. *W. Nicholson.*—When I have mercy and power together, then, with the Psalmist, I can say, "Lord, Thou art my defence." There is the power that *can* preserve me; there is the mercy that *will*. When these two are brought together, there is a refuge for my soul. Thou *canst* be a refuge, for Thou

hast the might ; Thou *wilt* be a refuge, for Thou hast the mercy. *A. G. Brown.*

The singer girds himself with the almightiness of God, and calls it all his own by faith. Sweet is the music of experience, but it is all for God ; there is not even a stray note for man, for self, or for human helpers. “ *For God is my defence, and the God of my mercy.* ” With full assurance he claims possession of the Infinite as his protection and security. He sees God in all, and all his own. Mercy rises before him, conspicuous and manifold, for he feels he is undeserving, and security is with him, undisturbed and impregnable, for he knows that he is safe in Divine keeping. *S.*

Joy-bells ring all through the Bible. The mission of the Gospel is to make happiness. The angel’s announcement of good tidings of great joy is going forth yet on every breeze. The story of the love of Christ is changing dark-

ness to light, despair to hope, tears to laughter, sorrow to rejoicing in all lands. It is the mission of every Christian to be a happiness-maker. Each one of us has power, too, to add something at least to the world’s gladness. We can do this in a thousand ways—by being joyful Christians ourselves, making our lives a sweet song ; by telling others the joyful things of the Word of God ; by doing kindnesses to all we meet ; by comforting sorrow, lifting burdens away, cheering sadness and weariness, and scattering benedictions wherever we go. *J. R. M.*

Every condition and place we are in should be a witness of our thankfulness ; this will make the times and places we live in the better for us. Praise is a just and due tribute for all God’s blessings. It is a debt always owing and always paying ; and the more we pay the more we shall owe ; upon the due discharge of this debt the soul will find peace. And a thankful heart to God is the greatest blessing of all. *Sibs.*

PSALM LX.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN ; SET TO SHUSHAN EDUTH : MIGHTAM OF DAVID, TO TEACH : WHEN HE STROVE WITH ARAM-NAHARAIM AND WITH ARAM-ZOBAB, AND JOAB RETURNED, AND SMOTE OF EDMON IN THE VALLEY OF SALT TWELVE THOUSAND.

- 1 O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast broken us down ;
Thou hast been angry ; O restore us again.
- 2 Thou hast made the land to tremble ; thou hast rent it :
Heal the breaches thereof ; for it shaketh.
- 3 Thou hast shewed thy people hard things :
Thou hast made us to drink the wine of staggering.
- 4 Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee,
That it may be displayed because of the truth. [Selah]
- 5 That thy beloved may be delivered,
Save with thy right hand, and answer us.
- 6 God hath spoken in his holiness ; I will exult :

- I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.
- 7 Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine ;
Ephraim also is the defence of mine head ;
Judah is my sceptre [or, *lawgiver*].
- 8 Moab is my washpot ;
Upon Edom will I cast my shoe :
Philistia, shout thou because of me.
- 9 Who will bring me into the strong city ?
Who hath led me unto Edom ?
- 10 Hast not thou, O God, cast us off ?
And thou goest not forth, O God, with our hosts.
- 11 Give us help against the adversary :
For vain is the help of man.
- 12 Through God we shall do valiantly :
For he it is that shall tread down our adversaries.

THE title takes us back to the longest and the most glorious of David’s wars, that with

the Ammonites and their Aramean allies. (See 2 Sam., chaps. 8, 10-12.) While David’s troops

were advancing so victoriously in the north the Edomites had fallen upon the unprotected land in the south, and here a new war awaited the victorious host, which called in question all the results achieved in the north. This Psalm refers especially to this Edomitic war. It is only in a general kind of way that the title gives to the Psalm its historical setting. It was composed before the victory in the Valley of Salt, and presupposes that the southern part of the land of Israel was badly laid waste by the Edomites, against whom it could bring into the field no sufficient body of troops. D.

TITLE. “*When he strove with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah.*” An insult offered to David’s ambassadors by Hanun, King of the Ammonites, led to a serious war. Hanun obtained mercenaries from Syria to re-enforce his army, Joab and Abishai his brother, David’s generals, gave them battle. Joab, opposed to the Syrians, gained the first success, and the Ammonites, seeing their allies routed, took to flight into their town. But this defeat provoked a great coalition, embracing all the people between the Jordan and the Euphrates. David, however, fearlessly marched against them at the head of his army; he vanquished all his enemies, and made himself master of the small Aramean kingdoms of Damaseus, Zobah, and Hamath, and subjugated the Eastern Idumeans, who met their final defeat in the Valley of Salt. *Lenormant.* — The Syrians on the north and east, and the Edomites on the south and southeast—the most powerful among all the adjacent kingdoms—made common cause against David, so that this eventful year became a crisis of immensely critical interest to himself and his people. Hence the pertinence of this Psalm. These were *live* issues, instinct with every element of vital interest. Would their God indeed be with His covenant people? Would He make them victorious over these ancient and mighty nations? C.

3. *Infatuation*, or “bewilderment”—literally, “reeling, staggering,” as the effects of intoxication. This infatuation is the wine which God has made them drink. The same figure occurs in many other passages. It denotes not merely a Divine punishment, but that kind of punishment which comes of men’s own desperate indulgence of their pride, folly, passion. When men *will* drink presumptuously of the cup of their own wickedness, God forces it, as it were, into their hands till they have drained the very dregs as the cup of His wrath. Thus God punishes evil with greater evil, pride with presumptuous pride, folly with more des-

perate folly. As is usual in the Old Testament, this, though sin as well as curse, is ascribed directly to God, as is the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, the sending of the evil spirit into Saul, and of a lying spirit into the false prophets. P.

4. Thou hast given a banner. Thou hast given us by the recent victory, after our prostrate condition, a banner of triumph to *lift up* (so the Hebrew), because of Thy faithfulness to Thy promise. “*The truth*” here answers to God’s “*holiness*” (v. 6). So long as soldiers see their banner *uplifted*, they flock round it with confidence. But when it is prostrate their spirits and hopes fall. The “*banner*” is a pledge of safety and a rallying point to those who fight under it. *Fausset.*—“*That it may be displayed because of the truth.*” Banners are for the breeze, the sun, the battle. Israel might well come forth boldly, for a sacred standard was borne aloft before them. The truth of God was involved in the triumph of David’s armies, he had promised them victory; and so in the proclamation of the Gospel we need feel no hesitancy, for as surely as God is true He will give success to His own Word. S.

5-7. Shechem, Succoth, Gilead, Manasseh, Ephraim, Judah. The Divine oracle promising victory confirmed David in the possession of the whole of Canaan, in accordance with its original geographical distribution. Shechem represents the east and Succoth the west side of the Jordan. Gilead was the portion of the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and so in conjunction with a part of the tribe of Manasseh covered the territory first reached after the journey through the wilderness, while Ephraim and Judah were the principal tribes between the river and the sea. My sceptre. An allusion to the promise of royal dignity to Judah in Gen. 49 : 10, where the same word is used. It is vested with supreme authority, but his staff or sceptre as its symbol. *De Witt.*

6. What God speaks “in His holiness” is a declaration or promise for the certainty and inviolability of which He answers with His holiness; it is, therefore, like an oath “by His holiness.” D.

6-8. David having received this word stands assured, that as Shechem and Succoth, Gilead and Manasseh, Ephraim and Judah would willingly submit to him and yield obedience, so, also, that Moab, Edom, and Philistia, who were his professed enemies, should be subdued to him. He expected to conquer and triumph over them because God had decreed and spoken it in His holiness. *Caryl.*

7. *To me (belongs) Gilead and to me Manasseh,*

and Ephraim the strength of my head, Judah my lawgiver. The idea is that the whole of Canaan rightfully belongs to Israel. The form of expression is analogous to that in the preceding verse, but with a beautiful variation. As the two great divisions of the country east and west of Jordan are there represented by detached points, Shechem and Succoth, so here by the names of extensive districts, Judah and Ephraim, the two largest territories on the west, Bashan and Gilead on the east, the latter called by its own name, the former by that of the tribe which occupied the greater part of it. The last clause does due honor to the military strength of Ephraim, but asserts the civil supremacy of Judah. A.—This verse has reference both to the geographical and to the political division of the Holy Land. Geographically, Gilead and Manasseh denote the Israelitish territory east of the Jordan, as Ephraim and Judah represent Western Palestine. Politically, the two last-mentioned tribes were the most important, the one in the north, and the other in the south; and thus the whole land and nation are, in fact, summed up. P.

“*Judah is (or, shall be) my lawgiver*”—i.e., all his subjects should be brought under one *Head*, one governor, who should give them laws according to which they should be ordered or governed, which power and authority belonged to the tribe of *Judah* according to that prophecy of Jacob to which the Psalmist here alludeth. Now in the Church and in matters of religion this one *Head* is *Christ*, even that “Lion of the tribe of Judah,” as He is called (Rev. 5 : 5). *J. Brinsley.*

8. The Psalmist anticipates not the constitution only of the kingdom in its integrity and its firm consolidation by the union of the various tribes, but the extension of the kingdom also by the subjugation of neighboring nations. Those nations are chiefly mentioned which had been from the earliest times the enemies, and the bitterest enemies, of Israel. The order in which they are mentioned is from the east, and thence along the south to the west. None of them was ever completely subjugated, though David greatly reduced them and humbled their power (2 Sam., chap. 8), but triumph over them forms part of the promise of later prophets. See especially Isa. 11 : 14, where it is promised in connection with the union of Ephraim and Judah. The expressions which follow, indicating the subjugation of Moab and Edom, are decidedly contemptuous. P.

Moab (is) my washpot; at Edom will I throw

my shoe; at me, Philistia, shout aloud! The three hostile powers with which Israel was most frequently at war are here put together as the objects of a contemptuous address. Moab is likened to the humblest household utensil, the vessel in which slaves were wont to wash their master's feet. Edom is likened to the slave himself, to whom or at whom the master throws his shoe when about to bathe his feet. A.—The Moabites as well as the Edomites were subdued by David, for David here justly celebrates his triumphs over them; but then was merely typified what Christ at length fulfilled, in that He reduced under His sway all adverse and hostile nations. *Calvin.*

9. *Who will bring me (to) the fenced city? Who has led me up to Edom?* In reliance on God's promise, and in the possession of the hope and courage just expressed, His people are ready to go forward, and only waiting for some one to conduct them into the enemy's country—nay, into his very citadel. The *fenced city*—literally, *city of defence* or *fortification*, a phrase already used in Psalm 31 : 21, is Petra, the famous capital of Idumea, hewn in the rock, and almost perfectly impregnable. A.—The entrance to Petra is by a narrow gorge lined by lofty precipices, formed by the channel of a rivulet. This defile is nearly two miles in length. At some places the overhanging rocks approach so near to each other that only two horsemen can proceed abreast. *Tweddle.*

Great success must be a stimulus to greater efforts, but must not become a reason for self-confidence. We must look to the strong for strength as much at the close of a campaign as at its beginning. High up among the stars stood the city of stone, but God could lead His servant up to it. No heights of grace are too elevated for us, the Lord being our leader, but we must beware of high things attempted in self-reliance. Excelsior is well enough as a cry, but we must look to the highest of all for guidance. S.

12. Through God we shall do.

In war these two must be joined, and indeed in all actions — *He, we; God and man*. “We shall do valiantly,” for God helps not remiss, or cowardly, or negligent men. And yet, that being done, the work is *His*; “He shall tread down;” the blow and the overthrow are not to be attributed to *us*, but to *Him*. *A. Clarke.* —From God all power proceeds, and all we do well is done by Divine operation; but still we, as soldiers of the great King, are to fight, and to fight valiantly, too. Divine working is not an argument for human inaction, but

rather is it the best excitement for courageous effort. S.—The Israel of God, His spiritual Israel, are likewise through Him more than conquerors. Though sometimes they may be

tempted to think that God has cast them off, and may be foiled in particular conflicts, yet God will bring them into the strong city at last. H.

PSALM LXI.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN ; ON A STRINGED INSTRUMENT. A PSALM OF DAVID.

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| <p>1 HEAR my cry, O God ;
Attend unto my prayer.</p> <p>2 From the end of the earth will I call unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed :
Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.</p> <p>3 For thou hast been a refuge for me,
A strong tower from the enemy.</p> <p>4 I will dwell in thy tabernacle for ever :
I will take refuge in the covert of thy wings.
[Selah]</p> | <p>5 For thou, O God, hast heard my vows :
Thou hast given <i>me</i> the heritage of those that fear thy name.</p> <p>6 Thou wilt prolong the king's life:
His years shall be as many generations.</p> <p>7 He shall abide before God for ever :
O prepare lovingkindness and truth, that they may preserve him.</p> <p>8 So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever,
That I may daily perform my vows.</p> |
|--|---|

THERE is no reason to doubt that David was the author, and the language of v. 2 renders it probable that it was written when he was shut out from the sanctuary, and therefore either during his persecution by Saul or during the rebellion of Absalom. V. 4 makes the latter the more probable occasion. At a time when the tabernacle had itself no settled resting-place, the wish to dwell and abide in it is not so natural as afterward, when the ark was fixed on Mount Zion. P.—It is a Psalm belonging to the time of Absalom, composed in Mahanaim or somewhere else in Gilead, when the royal army had beaten the rebels in the wood of Ephraim. D.—The king referred to in vs. 6 and 7 is evidently himself. He probably uses the third person because his thought embraces the royal line that God had promised should descend from him, and rule in righteousness forever. Under this aspect the Psalm is Messianic. *De Witt.*

The Psalm itself consists of a prayer with an expression of strong confidence (vs. 1-4), and an appeal to the Divine promise, as the ground and object of that confidence (vs. 5-8). A.

1-3. We may take this language as an index of his feeling of exile and loneliness when thrust away from the city of his throne and of

his God. To such a heart as David's such an exile would *seem* like a banishment to the ends of the earth. From this heart-oppressing exile—his soul overwhelmed with grief—he cried to God for help. Verily, that was a time for a child of God to pray! Why should he not? What else could he think of? Whither else could he turn for help? "Lead me to the rock which is *too high* for me to reach for safety without a guiding and helping hand." He pleads what God had done in his former exigencies: "For Thou *hast* in other days been a shelter for me: so be Thou my shelter yet again." This is one of the comforts of Christian experience—the logic of past mercies, good to inspire hope and prayer for help under pending and pressing want. C.

1. Hear my cry. When it comes to crying with us, we need not doubt but that it will come to attending with God. Our Heavenly Father is not hardened against the cries of His own children. What a consoling thought it is that the Lord at all times hears His people's cries, and is never forgetful of their prayers! Whatever else fails to move Him, praying breath is never spent in vain. S.

2. Will call unto Thee when my heart is overwhelmed. It is not lack of faith to feel an ill nor to be oppressed by it.

The heart may and must rise and sink ; we can by God's grace control it, hold it down, keep it outwardly still, hinder it from having any wrong vent ; we cannot hush its beatings. Hard words *will* vex ; unkindness *will* pierce ; neglect *will* wound ; threatened evils *will* make the soul quiver ; sharp pain or weariness *will* rack the body or make it restless ; cold *will* fret the frame ; hunger *will* gnaw it. But what says the Psalmist ? "When my heart is overwhelmed I will cry." To whom ? Not of God, but to God. As thou learnest this lesson, to carry all thy sorrows to God and lie at the Saviour's feet and spread thy griefs before Him, thou wilt find a calm come over thee thou knowest not whence. Thy heart will still rise and sink, not restlessly nor waywardly, not in violent gusts of passion ; but whether rising or sinking, amid all outward heavings of this world's waves, resting in stillness on the bosom of the ocean of the love of God. Then shalt thou learn, not to endure only patiently, but in everything against thy will humbly and quickly to see and to love the loving will of God. Thy faith and thy love and thy hope will grow the more thou seest the work of God with thee ; thou wilt joy in thy sorrow, and thy sorrow will be turned into joy. *Pusey.*

The rock was too high for David himself to get into, and therefore he sets to the scaling ladder. "*Lead me to the rock. Hear my cry, attend unto my prayer.*" So he makes prayer the scaling ladder to get upon that rock that otherwise had been too high for him ; he gets that safety and deliverance which otherwise but by prayer unto God had been impossible to have been obtained. *Jeremiah Dyke.*

It is more the image of one overtaken by the tide, as he is hastening onward to get beyond its reach, and yet with every step he sees it rolling nearer and nearer to him ; he hears its angry roar, the loosening sand sinks beneath his tread—a few minutes more, and the waves will be around him ; despair hath "*overwhelmed his heart ;*" when in the very depths of his agony he sees a point of rock high above the waves. "Oh, that I could reach it and be safe!" And then comes the cry, the agonizing cry, to Him that is mighty to save, "*Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.*" It is the sinner's cry to the sinner's Saviour ! *Bouchier.*—Tribulation brings us to God, and brings God to us. Faith's greatest triumphs are achieved in her heaviest trials. Affliction encompasses me as a cloud, it swallows me up like a sea, it shuts me in with thick darkness, yet God is near, near enough to hear my voice,

and I will call Him. Is not this brave talk ? S.

Christ is the Rock of Ages, to whom all weary, thirsty, wandering souls are invited to come for rest. No floods or storms can carry away that sure and safe retreat. Amid all the changes and agitations of the world the Rock of our salvation stands firm. It has been beaten upon by the tempests of war ; it has been assailed by the combined hosts of earth and hell ; busy hands have been laboring for centuries to dig up its foundations. But the Rock of Ages stands to-day, amid all the wastes and conflicts of the world, offering rest to the weary and the water of life to the perishing. Never before were the reasons for trusting in Christ so many and so strong as they are to-day. *D. Macdonald.*

How many confessions underlie these words. Blindness, else David would not have said, "Lead me." Weakness, otherwise he would not have thought of a rock. Littleness ; therefore he says, "Higher than I." The first thing that we all want is the feeling of safety. We need a calm, quiet place where our heaving thoughts will grow still, and where no external circumstances shall be able to move us greatly. That calm and refuge is Christ, and all who come nearer to Him do at His side pass strangely into peace. His work is so strong, His faithfulness is so sure, His presence is so tranquillizing that those who are brought to Him are always at rest. J. V.

In a state of ease, we have only to exchange one object of desire for another ; but when the world is impaired to us, when those we lean on are taken from us, then we must choose between despair and God ; we must find comfort nowhere, or all in Him ! The Christian is often observed to bear an overwhelming calamity better than the lighter afflictions of life ; and the reason is this : that then, beaten off from every other support, he is driven to his Rock. In ordinary trials, we are apt to look to ourselves ; in great disasters we are compelled to go in the strength of another ; the world appears a shadow, and only God remains ! *R. Hall.*

4. *Let me find shelter in the covert of Thy wings.* The Psalmist refers to the outspread wings of the cherubim on the Mercy-seat. The tabernacle was a figure of the heavenly sanctuary, the cherubim represented the protecting love of the heavenly King, and were the recognized symbols of His presence. *Cook.*—*I will sojourn (or abide) in Thy tent (or tabernacle) ages (or eternities—i.e., forever) ; I will trust*

(take refuge or find shelter) *in the shadow of Thy wings*. The first verb expresses strong desire or fixed determination. To dwell in God's tent or house is to be a member of His family, to enjoy His bounty and protection, and to live in intimate communion with Him. A.

He is of good cheer, for God has already proved Himself a refuge to him, a strong tower, bidding defiance to every attack, a tower which has surrounded him, the persecuted one, so that the enemy cannot possibly get at him (cf. Prov. 18:10). He is already on the way toward home, and that, too, his own most dearly loved, his true home; he will or shall (in accordance with God's will) dwell in God's tent. D.—This is the utterance of David's heart. Having loved the house and worship of God in His holy tabernacle above his chief joy; having given to it his best thoughts, his noblest powers of poetry and song; and having rested in the sweetness of trust and in the simplicity of faith upon God's promises to himself and his seed for generations to come, including the Great Messiah as the ultimate consummation of these promises (See 2 Sam., chap. 7), what could be more fitting than this outpouring of prayer and this utterance of his strong confidence in God? "Selah" is fully in place here. Let the reader pause and enter into the sympathies of David's great and godlike heart! C.

The bird will endure any violence of storm, if only the wing of the mother bird be extended over it and gathered about it. "I will cry unto Thee," said David, "when my heart is overwhelmed; I will trust in the covert of Thy wings." "I know whom I have believed," said Paul. The *faith* we have in His *dealings* rests upon the *knowledge* we have of *Him*. Comfort, therefore, widens as knowledge deepens. In our sorrow we shall as children of God be quieted by remembering that if we could see things exactly as He sees them, we should want events ordered precisely as He has ordered them. And if we are true sons and daughters of God, then we can trust Him for all the future. His love never wears out. C. H. P. —God's love covers all our sins; it hides us in the hollow of His hand; restless and careworn as we are, it shields us beneath the wings of the dove of peace. It brings rest to the weary, the entering into the rest that remaineth for the people of God, not after death only, but now. *Hallock*.

It is the within that makes the without. If the soul be jarring, no circumstances can be chiming. If the inner life be smitten with winds and tossed, the brightest and stillest out-

ward prospect will look stormy. If the soul but know how to sing inwardly, there will be birds enough outside to sing, even amid the most wintry weather. The great trouble is heart trouble. It is the philosophy of Christianity that it searches for the soul; if that be made right, prisons will become palaces. Rest for *souls* is the supreme gift. The great Teacher tells us that the way of the reception of this supreme gift is the way of the *yoke*. This is the inexorable way. The lawless soul must be the clashing soul. *Wayland Hoyt*.

5, 6. Observe how the Psalmist rings the changes on, "*Thou hast*," and "*I will*" (vs. 3, 4, 5, and 6). Experience is the nurse of faith. From the past we gather arguments for present confidence. Many and many a time had the persecutions of Saul and the perils of battle imperilled David's life, and only by miracle had he escaped, yet was he still alive and unhurt; this he remembers, and he is full of hope. S.

God has acknowledged David's cause; the land of Israel is again wrested from those to whom it does not belong, and there begins a new period of the reign of its lawful king. With reference to this new period the king beseeches for himself that God would add to the duration of his life another measure of more than a generation—*i.e.*, a rich measure. D.—His use of the third person shows that he does not mean himself alone, but the king of Israel as an ideal or collective person, comprehending his posterity. The life of this ideal person would of course not be restricted to a single generation, but continued through many, which is the meaning of the idiomatic expression in the last clause. A.

His years as many generations. He lived to see generation after generation personally; in his descendants he lived as king through a very long period; his dynasty continued for many generations; and in Christ Jesus, his seed and Son, spiritually David reigns on evermore. S.—The series of years and even ages of which he speaks extends prospectively to the coming of Christ, it being the very condition of the kingdom that God maintained them as one people under one head, or when scattered united them again. The same succession still subsists in reference to ourselves. Christ must be viewed as living in His members to the end of the world. *Calvin*.

8. So, in this hope, inspired by this sweet confidence in Thy promise, I will sing the praises of Thy name forever. We see that his religion was a living power in his soul—a

fountain of inspiration to his hope and endurance—an inexpressible comfort to his otherwise desolate heart. What time all else, or almost all, had failed him, his hope still rested on God's promise. He *had known God* ; had trusted Him through scenes of sore and searching trial before ; and this new avalanche of trouble only drove him again to the same Refuge. C.

He who has not in the sunny days made the Divine promises his own has no comforts to sustain him when trouble comes. But he who has pondered the Scriptures, and laid up in memory the precious truths and assurances, when called to pass through affliction has light in his dwelling. J. R. M.

PSALM LXII.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN ; AFTER THE MANNER OF JEDUTHUN. A PSALM OF DAVID.

- 1 My soul waiteth only upon God :
From him *cometh* my salvation.
- 2 He only is my rock and my salvation :
He is my high tower ; I shall not be greatly moved.
- 3 How long will ye set upon a man,
That ye may slay *him*, all of you,
Like a bowing wall, like a tottering fence ?
- 4 They only consult to thrust him down from
his excellency [*dignity*] ;
They delight in lies :
They bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. [Selah]
- 5 My soul, wait thou only upon God ;
For my expectation is from him.
- 6 He only is my rock and my salvation :
He is my high tower ; I shall not be moved.
- 7 With God is my salvation and my glory :

- The rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God.
- 8 Trust in him at all times, ye people ;
Pour out your heart before him :
God is a refuge for us. [Selah]
 - 9 Surely men of low degree are vanity [*a breath*], and men of high degree are a lie :
In the balances they will go up ;
They are together lighter than vanity.
 - 10 Trust not in oppression,
And become not vain in robbery :
If riches increase, set not your heart *thereon*.
 - 11 God hath spoken once,
Twice have I heard this ;
That power belongeth unto God :
 - 12 Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy :
For thou renderest to every man according to his work.

THIS bears a close resemblance in style and structure to the thirty-ninth, and was undoubtedly written by the same author. The earnestness of thought, the depth and force of religious feeling, no less than the vigor and sublimity of the language, leave no room for doubting the correctness of the inscription, which attributes it to David. The date of the composition is uncertain. It is more cheerful and hopeful than the Psalms written about the time of Absalom's revolt, though some expressions may seem to refer to the outburst of an insurrection. *Cook*.

Strong in his trust in God, though assailed and threatened afresh, the Divine poet places

himself, in calm resignation, in the hands of the one true Redeemer, and not only finds in Him rest, refreshment, strength for himself, but is also enabled to encourage, enlighten, and comfort others. Scarcely anywhere do we find faith in God more nobly asserted, more victoriously triumphant ; the vanity of man, of human strength and riches, more clearly confessed ; courage in the midst of peril more calm and more unshaken than in this Psalm, which is as forcible in its conception and its language, as it is remarkable for the vigorous and cheerful piety which it breathes. P.—The central thought—the key note of the Psalm is—God

only my help and salvation ; man powerless to harm me, but God almighty to defend. C.

The Psalm consists of three equal stanzas or strophes, each beginning with the particle *only*, and the first and second ending with *selah*. In all these parts the theme or burden is the same—to wit, a contrast between God and man, as objects of confidence. A.—The first two express the blessedness and security of trust in God when enemies assail (vs. 1-4, 5-8). The last places in forcible contrast with this the folly of reliance on man (vs. 9-12). P.

The whole tone is that of patient resignation. The first words are the key-note of the whole, “Truly unto God my soul is silence”—is all one great stillness of submissive waiting upon Him. It was in the very crisis of his fate, in the suspense of the uncertain issue of the rebellion, that these words, the very sound of which has calmed many a heart since, welled to his lips. The expression of unwavering faith and unbroken peace is much heightened by the frequent recurrence of the word, which is variously translated “truly,” “surely,” and “only.” It carries the force of confident affirmation, like the “verily” of the New Testament, and is here most significantly prefixed to the assertions of his patient resignation (v. 1) ; of God’s defence (v. 2) ; of the enemies’ whispered counsels (v. 4) ; to his exhortation of his soul to the resignation which it already exercises (v. 5) ; and to the triumphant reiteration of God’s all-sufficient protection. How beautifully, too, does that reiteration—almost verbal repetition—of the opening words strengthen the impression of his habitual trust. His soul in its silence murmurs to itself, as it were, the blessed thoughts over and over again. Their echoes haunt his spirit “lingering and wandering on, as loth to die ;” and if for a moment the vision of his enemies disturbs their flow, one indignant question flung at them suffices, “How long will ye rush upon a man ? (how long) will ye all of you thrust him down as (if he were) a bowing wall, a tottering fence ?” and with a rapid glance at their plots and bitter words, he comes back again to his calm gaze on God. Lovingly he accumulates happy names for Him, which, in their imagery, as well as in their repetition, remind us of the former songs of the fugitive. “My rock,” in whom I hide ; “He is my salvation,” which is even more than “from Him cometh my salvation ;” my “fortress,” my “glory,” “the rock of my strength,” “my refuge.” So many phases of his need and of God’s sufficiency thus gathered together, tell how familiar to the thoughts and real to the ex-

perience of the aged fugitive was his security in Jehovah. The thirty years since last he had wandered there have confirmed the faith of his earlier songs ; and though the ruddy locks of the young chieftain are silvered with gray now, and sins and sorrows have saddened him, yet he can take up again with deeper meaning the tones of his old praise, and let the experience of age seal with its “verily” the hopes of youth. Exhortations to his people to unite themselves with him in his faith, and assurances that God is a refuge for them too, with solemn warnings to the rebels, close this Psalm of glad submission. It is remarkable for the absence of all petitions. He needs nothing beyond what he has. As the companion Psalm (sixty-third) says, his soul “is satisfied.” Communion with God has its moments of restful blessedness, when desire is stilled, and expires in peaceful fruition. A. M.

1-4. This Psalm was composed when David had become aware of a conspiracy to cast him down from his position of confidence and honor. His enemies had sought to undermine his reputation by calumny ; and now they were preparing to rush upon him and overturn him like a tottering wall. But he descends into the depths of his soul, and finds there the calmness and security of an abiding trust in God. So deep and holy is this confidence, that he describes his soul as *silent* unto God—for such is the beautiful expression of the original—waiting without anxiety and without complaining. J. P. T.

1. For “only upon God” read “in silence for God only.” So in v. 5. *Am. Com.*—Or, “my soul is silently waiting unto God,” *i.e.*, turned toward Him in speechless expectation, with unutterable yearning (see Psalm 33 : 20). *Cook*.

“My soul is *silent* toward God.” In reverent awe and quiet trust my soul sits peacefully before Him, biding His time for deliverance, trustful that He doeth all things well. The same word, in a different grammatical form, occurs v. 5 : “My soul, be thou *silent* toward God only. C.—The Hebrew word used is *dumijah*—that is, silent, resting, expecting, reflecting, solicitous, and observing. We ought to be subject to God as silent disciples before a master. Whatever God has allowed to happen to me, yet I will be silent before Him, and from my heart admire, both enduring His strokes and receiving His teaching. *Thomas Le Blanc*.

Only. The particle may be rendered *only*, as restrictive ; or, *surely*, as affirmative. Our translators have rendered it differently in differ-

ent verses of this Psalm ; in v. 1, “*truly* ;” in vs. 2, 4, 5, 6, “*only* ;” in v. 9, “*surely*.” If we render “*only*,” the meaning will be here that God exclusively is the object of trust ; if “*surely*,” that this truth, that God is his salvation, has come home to him with a more lively conviction, with a more blessed certainty than ever. The first line of the verse rendered literally is, “Only unto God my soul is silence,” *i.e.*, is hushed into perfect resignation before Him, simply trusting in His love, and leaving all that concerns me to the disposal of His fatherly will. “It is,” says Calvin, “that settled submission, when the faithful rest in the promises of God, give place to His Word, obey His rule, and keep down every murmur of passion in their hearts.” But this, as he also remarks most truly, is the result not of one only, but of many struggles with the temptations of Satan. P.

The heart is ever prone to divide its confidence between God and the creature. We must “wait *only* upon God.” “He *only*” must be our “rock,” our “salvation,” and our “defence.” Then we are frequently tempted to look to an arm of flesh *first*, and when that fails us we look to God. He must be our *first* as well as our *only* resource. C. Mackintosh.—He who talks much of his troubles to *men* is apt to fall into a way of saying too little of them to *God* ; while he who has often experienced the blessed alleviation which flows from silent converse with the Eternal, loses much of his desire for the sympathy of his fellows. Spreading out our distress *too largely* before men serves only to make it broader ; and hence the proverb, “Talking of trouble makes it double.” On the contrary, if when in distress we can bear it always as in the sight of God, submissively waiting for succor from Him, according to these words of the Psalmist, the distress lies upon the surface of the heart like the morning mist, which the sun as it ascends dissipates into light clouds. Tholuck.

The plain meaning of this phrase is resignation ; and resignation is just a silent will. Such a silent will is a strong will. The true secret of strength lies in submission. We must keep our hearts silent too. He cannot say, “My soul is silent unto God,” whose whole being is buzzing with vanities and noisy with the din of the market-place. There must be the silence of the mind as well as of the heart and will. We must cultivate the habit of detaching our thoughts from earth and keeping our minds still before God, that He may pour His light into them. A. M.

2. *Only He* (is) *my rock and my salvation, my height* (high place, refuge, or asylum) ; *I shall not be shaken* (moved from my firm position) *much* (or *greatly*). The adverbial use of *much* is the same in Hebrew and in English. This qualified expression seems to be intended to suggest that he does not hope to escape all disaster and calamity, but only such as would be ruinous. *He only*, God and no one else, can be such a protector. A.

My salvation. The repetition of the word is not without meaning. Not only does his salvation *come from* God, but God *is* his salvation. The being on whom he waits, the loving person in whom he trusts, the God whose arms compass him about, is to him all that is comprehended in that great word salvation. He heaps these epithets upon God, says Calvin, that he may use them as so many shields against the assaults of Satan. P.—“Even He that is the Rock of ages is my Rock ; He that is the God of salvation is my Salvation ; He that is the Most High is my High Place ; and therefore I have all the reason in the world to confide in Him. H.

3. How long will ye rush against a man,
Will ye all of you break (him) down,
As (though he were) a bowing wall, a tottering fence ?

4. Only from his dignity have they taken counsel to thrust him down. P.

5. *Only to God be still my soul, for from Him (is) my hope.* The view just taken of his fellow-men drives him back to God, and he exhorts himself to cherish the same confidence which he had before expressed. *Be still*, silent, trusting, and submissive. A.—Emphatic here is the word “*only*.” Look to God and to Him *only* ; to no one else ; shut off absolutely all other reliance ; settle it deeply in thy soul that no other help is to be thought of. His is all-sufficient ; none other can avail to the least purpose whatever. C.

They trust not God *at all* who trust Him not *alone*. He that stands with one foot on a rock and another foot upon a quicksand will sink and perish, as certainly as he that standeth with both feet upon a quicksand. David knew this, and therefore calleth earnestly upon his soul (for his business lay most within doors) to trust only upon God. Trapp.—That life is most holy in which there is least of petition and desire, and most of waiting upon God ; that in which petition most often passes into thanksgiving. In the prayer taught by Christ there is only one petition for personal good, and that a singularly simple and modest one, ‘Give us

this day our daily bread," and even that expresses dependence far rather than anxiety or desire. F. W. R.

For from Him is my hope. He never disappoints the patient abiding of His children. There is laid up, He says, a sure reward for my silence, and therefore will I restrain myself lest my haste should hinder the course of my salvation. *Calvin.*—Our patience is quite as much a measure of our wisdom as our enterprise; nay, what folly stamps every enterprise which is not begun in the patience which can bear delays as well as in the courage that can dare risks! Children of time, when we are doing our best we must wait God's hours for opportunity in our special aims; and, above all our special aims, we must lean upon Him to carry us forward in the one Divine way which earthly power may accept but not control. Blessed is the office of true patience in relation to time. Vast is the loss it saves by keeping for efficient action the time and thought saved from fretting and struggling against what cannot be helped. Vast is the gain it secures by keeping the soul calm before God, accepting the allotments of His providence, and watching wisely the lessons of the events which it cannot control. *Hallock.*

6, 7. Twice in this Psalm hath he repeated this, in the second and in the sixth verses, "*He is my rock and my salvation, and my defence,*" and (as it is enlarged in the seventh verse) "*my refuge and my glory.*" If my "*refuge,*" what enemy can pursue me? If my "*defence,*" what temptation shall wound me? If my "*rock,*" what storm shall shake me? If my "*salvation,*" what melancholy shall deject me? If my "*glory,*" what calumny shall defame me? God is all these, and all else that all souls can think to every believer. *Donne.*—He in whom believers trust is a great God, and loves to do all things like Himself. Wherefore look for great things from Him: great assistances; great enlargements; great deliverances; yea, the forgiving of great sins, and the great gift of a great salvation. *Arrowsmith.*

Observe how the Psalmist brands his own initials upon every name which he rejoicingly gives to his God—*my* expectation, *my* rock, *my* salvation, *my* glory, *my* strength, *my* refuge; he is not content to know that the Lord is all these things; he acts faith toward Him, and lays claim to Him under every character. S.

8. Trust in God is that high act or exercise of faith whereby the soul, looking upon God and casting itself on His goodness, power, promises, faithfulness, and providence, is lifted up above fears and discouragements; above

perplexing doubts and disquietments; either for the obtaining and continuance of that which is good, or for the preventing or removing of that which is evil. "*Trust in Him at all times.*" *T. Lye.*—Trust in Him upon every emergency, to guide us when we are in doubt, to protect us when we are in danger, to supply us when we are in want, to strengthen us for every good word and work. H.—We should trust when we can see, as well as when we are utterly in the dark. Adversity is a fit season for faith; but prosperity is not less so. God at all times deserves our confidence. We in all circumstances need to place our confidence in Him. S.

What God seeks is the confidence, the affection, the entire possession of the living, thinking, intelligent, undying spirit—the spirit which was originally formed to bear the lineaments of His own image—the spirit for whose redemption His only begotten Son hath lived and labored and died. It is this which God seeks, and when He gets it He not only obtains what He seeks, but He gets moreover everything else which the man has—a key to all his treasures—a place in all his enjoyments—a life-interest in all his possessions. He has only to touch the springs that are in the heart, and everything else which the man has will be consecrated or set apart for His service. J. A. W.

Pour out your heart before Him. David's faith had been so richly joyous to his own soul, and had brought him such salvation over his personal enemies, that he can now commend it most heartily to all people in all their possible emergencies. Oh, all ye people of every name and of all conditions—at all times, under whatever trials or straits—pour out your heart before this great and bountiful God. He is a refuge for all who put their trust in Him. Pause and think of it! Burdened hearts will here find their burdens lifted; desolate hearts will be cheered; the sad will be made joyful; the lost will be saved, in the love and the might of this perfect Saviour. C.

It is a personal and sacred intimacy which the Psalmist means, a dear, confidential friendship, a coming to Him as we come to the tenderest and truest heart on earth that gives back the throbbing of our own, a touching of His hand, a looking into His eyes, a hearing of His tender words, a consciousness of His nearness, the sunny warmth of His smile bathing us, the door of His sheltering bosom open to us in all hours of cold and fear and loneliness, His light shining upon our darkened path, His strength helping us over difficulties, His joy illumining

sad hours, His sympathy bending over us when we droop in grief, His assured, unchanging and inalienable faithfulness abiding by us in trials and cares and wanderings till the world shall end. We cannot tell a stranger of this alliance ; we have no language for those strange, conscious interviews wherein heaven and earth blend, those speechless moments when God and we come together, and down in the tongueless joy of our souls the thought throbs silently, “ *It is good to draw nigh to God.* ” *A. L. Stone.*

According to our love, so is our faith and trust in God ; and according to our trust, such is our freedom at the throne of grace. Trust in Him, and pour out your hearts before Him. *S. Lee.*—God has given thee His Son’s righteousness to justify thee ; He has also, because thou art a son, sent forth the Spirit of His Son into thy heart to satisfy thee, and to help thee to cry unto Him, Father, Father ! Wilt thou not cry ? wilt thou not desire ? Thy God has bidden thee open thy mouth ; He has bid thee open it wide, and promised, saying, “ and I will fill it ; ” and wilt thou not desire ? Oh, thou hast a license, a leave, a grant to desire ; wherefore, be not afraid to desire great mercies of the God of heaven. *Bunyan.*

Prayer is believing work, thinking work, searching work, and nothing worth if heart and hand do not join in it. *T. Adams.*—When thou prayest, rather let thy heart be without words than thy words without heart. Prayer will make a man cease from sin, or sin will entice a man to cease from prayer. *An.*

Faith in prayer is a general quality of the whole soul in all its acts and aspects toward the Saviour, and pertains to its habitual attitude ; It is not a mere sudden, special expectation of having some greatly wanted boon granted. It is, for the most part, a grace of slow, patient, and silent growth. Most of us, in our common moods, scarcely touch the rim of its great depth of meaning, or taste of its incalculable peace. It is true just as it stands—“ According to your faith, in asking, be it unto you. ” It is true of our private conflicts with the tempter, our struggles with ourselves, our resistance of the sins that most easily beset us, our fight with temper and pride and indolence and luxury, with Satan in his most angelic garment. Spiritual victory and progress will be gained on our knees. *F. D. H.*

Prayer, to one who lives in daily service of God, oftentimes takes the form of simple communion, the spreading out of our life to one whom we love and trust, not for the sake of any special advice or help, but for the heart-

rest which there is in the thing itself. For none love to lean and recline entirely upon another so much as strong natures that ordinarily do not lean at all ; and so the heart that goes shaded and shut, that hides its thoughts and dreads the knowledge of men’s eyes, flings itself wide open to the eye of God. *Anon.*

To be a religious man and to pray are really one and the same thing. To join the thought of God with every thought of any importance that occurs to us ; in all our admiration of external nature to regard it as the work of His wisdom ; to take counsel with God about all our plans, that we may be able to carry them out in His name ; and even in our most mirthful hours to remember His all-seeing eye ; this is the prayer without ceasing to which we are called, and which is really the essence of true religion. *Schleiermacher.*

The habit of exposing the contents of the heart to Christ, of referring all our actions to His will, of commending all our troubles to His care, and all our difficulties to His direction, the realizing Him in some measure as being by our side, always sympathizing, always inviting our confidence, always ready and willing to help us, the being sincere in all our dealings with Him, and perfectly single-minded in seeking to know His will—this is one great and sure test of love for Him. *E. M. G.*

Learn to entwine with your prayers the small cares, the trilling sorrows, the little wants of daily life. Whatever affects you—be it a changed look, an altered tone, an unkind word, a wrong, a wound, a demand you cannot meet, a change you cannot notice, a sorrow you cannot disclose—turn it into prayer and send it up to God. Disclosures you may not make to man you can make to the Lord. Man may be too little for your great matters ; God is not too great for your small ones. Only give yourself to prayer, whatever be the occasion that calls for it. *Winslow.*

The more we pray, so much the more prayer becomes indispensable to us. The more our heart is accustomed to converse with Jesus—to tell Him everything, both great and small, to lay before Him our heights and depths—the more the heart pours out itself to Him, the more it longs for Him. For not merely our being accustomed to Him, but His Spirit that He gives us, binds us to His heart. *Caspars.*

When we turn to Jesus, who can read our inmost soul—when we turn to Him, who never will upbraid us or despise us, though we make bare to Him every poor weakness, every sorrow, and every sin about us—we feel that the

need for that reserve is gone, and that it is no shame nor humiliation to tell out to Him all we fear and suffer, with the same abandonment with which the little child sobs out the story of its little sorrows at a kind mother's knee. At the throne of grace, the man who, whatever he suffered, would never complain to mortal, may without reserve lay before the Redeemer the tale of his wants and woes. *A. K. H. Boyd.*

We are opposing God's method of working, if our life has a tendency to incapacitate us for the enjoyment of *prayer at all times*. If by needless excess of worldly cares; if by inordinate desires, which render it impossible for us to accomplish our objects in life *without* such excess of care; if by frivolous habits; if by the reading of infidel or effeminate literature; if by an indolent life; if by any self-indulgence in physical regimen—we render the habit of fragmentary prayer impracticable or unnatural to us, *we are crossing the methods of God's working*. Something has gone wrong, *is* going wrong, in the life of that Christian who finds himself thus estranged from filial freedom with God. Such a Christian must, sooner or later, be brought back to Christ, and must begin life anew. He will come back heavy laden and in tears. *Phelps.*

Private prayer is a golden key to unlock the mysteries of the Word unto us. The knowledge of many choice and blessed truths are but the returns of private prayer. The Word dwells most richly in their hearts who are most in pouring out of their hearts before God in their closets. *T. Brooks.*

God is a refuge for us. The time of trouble is the time of prayer. And this throws light upon God's dealings with men, and families, and nations. He sends trouble to make men see their weakness and feel their need of Him, and call unto Him for help and rescue. The one hundred and seventh Psalm recites these fluctuations of God's providence and of man's confidence, and reiterates with every illustration this historic burden: "Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses." *A. L. Stone.*

Cavils against prayer. "God's promises, by reason of His unchangeableness, may be relied on; what occasion, then, of prayer, seeing the thing promised will come round of its own steady accord, whether you open your lips or no?" The answer is short and simple. These promises are made only to those who expect, and desire, and ask for them. They are not promised indifferently and come out of their

own accord to all, but to such only who have meditated them, and who value them, and desire them, and earnestly seek them; being the high and holy attractions by which God intended to work upon the nature of man, and lead it out of its present low and sunken estate into glorious liberty and unwearied ambition of every noble excellence. They are prizes in the hand of God to stimulate the soul's activities—more glorious prizes than laurel wreaths—and they are yielded only to an application of faculties, at the least, as intense and ardent as is put forth in pursuit of human ambition. God doth not cheapen His promises down to a glance at them with the eye, or a mouthing of them with the tongue, but He requireth of those that would have them an admiration equal to that of lovers, an estimation equal to that of royal diadems, and a pursuit equal to that of Olympic prizes. Another cavil against prayer is drawn from the unchangeableness of God. If God's promises did embrace nothing but abstract justice, and measure out nice and strict desert, then their unchangeableness were the death-blow to all expectation of future weal; but seeing they contain mercy, and forgiveness, and peace, and everlasting blessedness to all who receive His oracles and walk thereby—being a rule not to equity only, but a rule to mercy and to bounty, and to whatever else is amiable and attractive to the soul of man—it comes to pass that their stability and unchangeableness is the stability and unchangeableness of that wise and wide and lovely administration which sufficeth to comfort and upbind the fallen, as well as to strike down and discomfit the refractory and rebellious. *E. Irving.*

9. Of low degree. Our estimate of man depends upon our estimate of God. David knows that men of low and high degree, if separated from the primal fount of every good, weigh *nothing*, and are less than nothing. *Tholuck.*—All are less (lighter) than a breath. Two Hebrew words for man—the man of the earth, frail; and the man in power and dignity, commanding—are brought together here to give force to this statement; that all men alike—the least or the greatest—are less than a breath when measured against the great God. C.—If there were any one among men immortal, not liable to sin, or change, whom it were impossible for any one to overcome, but who was strong as an angel, such a one might be something; but inasmuch as every one is a man, a sinner, mortal, weak, liable to sickness and death, exposed to pain and terror, and liable to so many miseries that it is impossible to count

them, the conclusion must be a valid one :
 "Man is nothing." *Arndt.*

10. They are not to allow their heart to be befooled by unjust gain on their own part, neither are they when their riches increase to set their heart upon them, as if they were something truly great and making blessed. . D.—Money will purchase plenty, but not peace ; it will furnish your table with luxuries, but not you with an appetite to enjoy them ; it will surround your sick-bed with physicians, but not restore health to your sickly frame ; it will encompass you with a cloud of flatterers, but never procure you one true friend ; it will bribe into silence the tongues of accusing men, but not an accusing conscience ; it will pay some debts, but not the least one of all your debts to the law of God ; it will relieve many fears, but not those of guilt—the terrors that crown the brows of Death. He stands as grim and terrible by the dying bed of wealth as by the pallet of the poorest beggar whom pitiless riches has thrust from her door. *Guthrie.*

If riches increase set not your hearts thereon. Because it is hard to have riches and not to trust in them if they increase, though by lawful and honest means, we must take heed lest we let out our affections inordinately toward them. *Set not your heart upon them ;* be not eager for them, nor put a confidence in them as your portion ; do not value yourselves and others by them ; make not the wealth of the world your chief good and highest end ; in short, do not make an idol of it." This we are most in danger of doing when they increase ; when the grounds of the rich man brought forth plentifully, then he said to his soul, *Take thine ease* in these things. It is a smiling world that is most likely to draw the heart away from God, on whom only it should be set. H.—Many a man when he begins to accumulate wealth commences at the same moment to ruin his soul, and the more he acquires, the more closely he blocks up his liberality, which is, so to speak, the very mouth of spiritual life. Instead of doing more for God he does less ; the more he saves the more he wants, and the more he wants of this world the less he cares for the world to come. S.

Trust not to the omnipotency of gold, and say not unto it, Thou art my confidence. A slave unto Mammon makes no servant unto God. Covetousness cracks the sinews of faith ; numbs the apprehension of anything above sense, and only affected with the certainty of things present makes a peradventure of things to come ; lives but unto one world, nor hopes but fears

another ; makes their own death sweet unto others, bitter unto themselves ; brings formal sadness and scenical mourning. *Browne.*—

Where wealth accumulates around those *whose hearts are set upon it*, it develops and gives domination to self-conceit ; a conceit that *they can do something better* for themselves than bowing to God ; that they know *something better* than to submit to God's teachings ; that they can secure to themselves what is better, and happier, and more ennobling than the holiness, the meekness, the humility, the self-denial, the devotion, which are inseparable from the possession of the favor of God. Growing wealth nourishes this vain conceit. It makes men feel that riches are a sure, reliable basis of their trust ; that wealth actually meets all their wants ; that it is a resource which will always transcend all their wants. It inflates them to say to the claims of religion, to the pleadings of Christ's ambassadors, to God Himself, "Who is the Lord, that we should serve *Him* ? and what profit shall we have if we pray unto Him." *J. Vance.*

It is dangerous even to *contemplate* successful, sudden riches. While you look, you envy, you thirst. There is nothing evil in riches, unless got by wrong. No, but the *deceitfulness* of riches, their dominion over the heart, their idolatrous, absorbing power, that is the danger. Riches may increase, by God's providence, even in the way of this pilgrimage ; but God's direction is, *if* they increase, set not your heart upon them. G. B. C.

To be rich is a grave responsibility ; to desire to be rich is a great temptation ; to resolve to be rich is a fearful peril. None are ever accused or denounced in the Gospel simply for having riches ; but such are warned against making riches their trust. The history of mercantile communities, of railway investments, of stock speculations, show that nothing is more uncertain or delusive than what men fancy to be prosperity ; and the history of the Church shows that nothing is more likely to draw away the heart from God than the possession of great wealth. Hence the rich are admonished to cultivate the sense of dependence upon God, and to save themselves from corruption and apostasy by giving freely to all good causes. The *desire* of riches should never be suffered to take possession of the heart, for this corroding passion is a root of all evil ; while the *purpose* to be rich, as the one aim of life, is almost certain to lure one on to the destruction of his soul. No sin is more dangerous than covetousness ; none more damning. The offset to this perilous

temptation is faith. A faith that measures this life by the next ; a faith that believes in God as the rewarder of them that seek Him ; a faith that puts righteousness above Mammon ; a faith that sees Christ upon His throne, and feels assured of immortality at His appearing—can rest content with the bare means of living, and of serving Him. When earthly possessions vanish this contented piety realizes the greatness of its gain. J. P. T.

If a rich man employ his wealth well, he will possess it the longer ; but if he set his heart too much upon it, he will quickly lose it ; he may possess it, but by no means must he let his wealth possess him. *Spencer*.—If thou desire not to be too poor, desire, also, not to be too rich. He is rich, not that possesses much, but that covets no more ; and he is poor, not that enjoys little, but that wants too much. The contented mind wants nothing which it hath not ; the covetous mind wants not only what it hath not, but likewise what it hath. *Quarles*.

Be charitable before wealth make thee covetous, and lose not the glory of the mite. If riches increase, let thy mind hold pace with them, and think it not enough to be liberal, but munificent. Though a cup of cold water from some hand may not be without its reward, yet stick not thou for wine and oil for the wounds of the distressed, and treat the poor as our Saviour did the multitude, to the reliques of some baskets. Diffuse thy beneficence early, and while thy treasures call thee master ; there may be an Atropos of thy fortunes before that of thy life, and thy wealth cut off before that hour when all men shall be poor. *Browne*.

There can be nothing intrinsically wrong in the gathering of riches. The harm comes in through the spirit in which all this is done, and the distinction between the right way and the wrong way has been stated with singular force and felicity by Ruskin : “ With all brave and rightly trained men their work is first, their fee second—very important always, but still second. And this is no small distinction. It is between life and death *in* a man ; between heaven and hell *for* him. You cannot serve two masters. If your work is first with you, and your fee second, work is your master, and the Lord of work, who is God. But if your fee is first with you, and your work second, fee is your master, and the lord of fee, who is the devil.” Wealth won by those with whom fee is second should bring with it slight taint of poison, and be no more deserving of disapprobation than the acquirement of great stores of learning, or the attainment of high skill in the

use of the pen, the brush, or the chisel. Herein, no doubt, lies the great difficulty in the whole matter. It is safe to say that it takes more grace to get rich in a strictly Christian spirit than to spend what has been accumulated. In order to win wealth, one must face fierce competition at every turn ; and the temptations are frequent and severe to meet the competition that is unfair and unscrupulous upon its own ground—to fight the commercial devil with his own weapons, forgetting to take God into counsel, that a better way may be found. “ Christianity says, Whatever thy hands find to do that is lawful to be done, do it with the whole heart. But do it to the glory of God. Be unworldly at your world’s work. Buying, possessing, accumulating—this is not worldliness. But doing this in the love of it, with no love of God paramount, doing it so that thoughts of eternity and of God are an intrusion, doing it so that one’s spirit is secularized in the process—this is worldliness. Let a man beware of this. It will eat out his piety as inevitably as he lives, and allows it.” (*II. Johnson*.) J. M. Oxley.

11, 12. In conclusion, the sacred poet solemnly confirms his previous exhortation by an appeal to God’s revelation. *Once . . . twice*, i.e., many times. Compare Job 33 : 14 ; 40 : 5. And this is the substance of the revelation, that God is both a God of power and a God of love. If we need strength, we shall find it not in man, who is but as a fleeting vapor, but in God, who is Almighty. If we covet a reward, let us seek it not in robbery or in riches, but from the loving hand of Him who rewardeth every man according to his work. This is the only truly worthy representation of God. Power without love is brutality, and love without power is weakness. Power is the strong foundation of love, and love is the beauty and the crown of power. P.—There are really three attributes of God here mentioned, His power, His mercy, and His justice ; but as the last is only introduced to qualify the second, by a kind of afterthought, they may still be reckoned as but two. A.

There now follow two Divine utterances. They are the two great truths : that God has power over everything earthly, so that nothing happens without Him and everything opposed to Him must sooner or later succumb ; and that to this same God, the Lord of all, belongs also grace, the energy of which is measured in accordance with His omnipotence. The poet confirms these two truths by appealing to His righteous rule in history. He recompenses

every man according to his work, as Paul confesses (Rom. 2 : 6) no less than David, and indeed in David's words. Each one is recompensed according to his behavior, which is the outcome of the relation in which he stands to God. He who opposes the will of God has to feel God's punitive power ; and he who, longing for salvation, resigned his own will to God's, receives from God the promised reward of fidelity ; his resignation becomes attainment, and his hoping accomplishment. D.

11. Power belongeth unto God.

The life and vigor of faith is very much concerned in the belief of God's power. It is, indeed, one of the first steps to all religion. Therefore it is put in the front of our creed : " I believe in God, the Father Almighty ;" and he that believes that first article will the more easily believe all the rest. W. Wisheart.

12. Also unto Thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy. This tender attribute sweetens the grand thought of his power : the Divine strength will not crush us, but will be used for our good. God is so full of mercy that it belongs to Him, as if all the mercy in the universe came from God, and still was claimed by Him as His possession. His mercy, like His power, endureth forever, and is ever present in Him, ready to be revealed. S.

A perfectly righteous Being must be merciful, because He must desire that all other beings were righteous, and to attain this is the highest mercy. And, conversely, a perfectly merciful Being must be righteous, because that which mercy or grace desires is the highest welfare of all, and this can be attained only through righteousness. The truth that justice and mercy are from the same root in the Divine nature ap-

pears to be obscured in modern Christendom, where mercy is too often thought of as opposed to justice, and needing some artificial reconciliation with it. But it was understood in Israel of old. " To Thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy, for Thou renderest to every man according to his work," said the Psalmist—that is to say, " Because justice is Thine, therefore is mercy Thine also." M.

These, then, are the *two* grand truths that the *law*, yea, the whole *revelation* of God, declares through every page. He is the *Almighty*—He is the *Most Merciful* ; and hence the *inference*, the powerful, just, and holy God, the most merciful and compassionate Lord, *will* by and by *judge the world*, and *will render to man according to his works*. A. Clarke.

Be careful rather of what thou dost than of what thou hast ; for what thou hast is none of thine, and will leave thee at thy death. But what thou dost is thine, and will follow thee to thy grave, and plead for thee or against thee at thy resurrection. Quarles.

These great central truths in respect to God and His ways with man were impressively revealed to the ancients of David's time, and indeed to the ages long before. They are here because they bear strongly on the points contemplated in this Psalm. This great God, of boundless power, and of blended justice and mercy, will forevermore take cognizance of the moral life of His creature man. Let none think to evade His judgments ! To all who wait before Him in silent reverence and obedient trust, it shall be well ; but woe to him who recklessly disowns His authority and tramples on His law ! C.

PSALM LXIII.

A PSALM OF DAVID, WHEN HE WAS IN THE WILDERNESS OF JUDAH.

- 1 O GOD, thou art my God ; early [or, *earnestly*] will I seek thee :
 My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee,
 In a dry and weary land, where no water is.
 2 So have I looked upon thee in the sanctuary,
 To see thy power and thy glory.
 3 For thy lovingkindness is better than life .
 My lips shall praise thee.
 4 So will I bless thee while I live :
 I will lift up my hands in thy name.
 5 My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness ;
 And my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips ;
 6 When I remember thee upon my bed,

- And meditate on thee in the night watches.
 7 For thou hast been my help,
 And in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.
 8 My soul followeth hard after thee :
 Thy right hand upholdeth me.
 9 But those that seek my soul, to destroy it,
 Shall go into the lower parts of the earth.
 10 They shall be given over to the power of the sword :
 They shall be a portion for foxes.
 11 But the king shall rejoice in God :
 Every one that sweareth by him shall glory ;
 For the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

THROUGHOUT his Psalms David expresses intense delight in all holy seasons, services, and observances, fervent longing when separated from the tabernacle for a season (61, 63) ; he is never weary of extolling the grandeur, beauty, and heart-controlling influences of the sanctuary ; but he dwells with far higher rapture upon the heavenly realities, of which these are significant adumbrations ; secure of God's love, joying in God's presence, reposing on His protection, whether in his flight from Saul, or in conflict with foreign enemies, or in the period of deepest humiliation, of bodily and mental suffering. *Cook.*

The great peculiarity of this Psalm is its intense spirituality. It does not recount God's wonders in creation or in providence, does not dwell on anything He has made, but thinks only of Himself as He has been set forth in the institutions of the covenant people, or in the experience of the writer. The soul kindles as it muses on the Most High and His varied perfections. It is the Giver and not His gifts on which it loves to meditate. When God's praises are sung it is not formally or as a matter of course, but with jubilant lips as a most grateful service. And even in the stillness of the night the same theme occupies the mind as that to which it instinctively turns whenever left to its own impulses. No ancient literature of any

people or country expresses such a rapturous sense of communion with God, and yet free from any sense of mystic absorption in Him. It is peculiar to the Psalter alone. T. W. C.

The Psalms have found such constant favor in every portion of the Christian Church because they address themselves to the simple, intuitive feelings of the renewed soul. They represent the freshness of the soul's infancy, the love of the soul's childhood ; and, therefore, are to the Christian what the love of parents, the sweet affections of home, and the clinging memory of infant scenes are to men in general. *Irving.*

This is unquestionably one of the most beautiful and touching Psalms in the whole Psalter. Donne says of it : " As the whole book of Psalms is *oleum effusum*, an ointment poured out upon all sorts of sores, a cerecloth that supple all bruises, a balm that searches all wounds ; so are there some certain Psalms that are imperial Psalms, that command over all affections and spread themselves over all occasions—catholic, universal Psalms, that apply themselves to all necessities. . This is one of those ; for of those constitutions which are called Apostolical, one is that the Church should meet very day to sing this Psalm. And Chrysostom testifies, " That it was decreed and ordained by the primitive fathers that no day should pass with-

out the public singing of this Psalm.' " And again he observes, that " the spirit and soul of the whole Book of Psalms is contracted into this Psalm." That the author was David I see no reason to doubt. Characterized as it is by an exquisite tenderness and a deep personal affection toward God, and yet not wanting, withal, in energy, and even a certain abruptness of expression, it bears all the marks of his poetry. It is probable that the Psalm was composed when he was on the other side of the Jordan, in his flight from Absalom. The very tenderness and depth of feeling which characterize it, and which it has in common with 42, are what might be looked for in a heart sorely wounded and tried in its natural affections, and therefore cleaving with the more intense, devoted love to Him of whom it could say : " Thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of Thy wings will I shout for joy." It is remarkable that in this Psalm, as in the last, there is no petition. There is gladness, there is praise, there is the most exalted communion with God, there is longing for His presence as the highest of all blessings ; but there is not one word of asking for temporal, or even for spiritual good.

As David's life shines in his poetry, so also does his character. That character was no common one. It was strong with all the strength of man, tender with all the tenderness of woman. Naturally brave, his courage was heightened and confirmed by that faith in God which never, in the worst extremity, forsook him. Naturally warm-hearted, his affections struck their roots deep into the innermost centre of his being. In his love for his parents, for whom he provided in his own extreme peril—in his love for his wife Michal—for his friend Jonathan, whom he loved as his own soul—for his darling Absalom, whose death almost broke his heart—even for the infant, whose loss he dreaded—we see the same man, the same depth and truth, the same tenderness of personal affection. On the other hand, when stung by a sense of wrong or injustice, his sense of which was peculiarly keen, he could flash out into strong words and strong deeds. He could hate with the same fervor that he loved. Evil men and evil things, all that was at war with goodness and with God—for these he found no abhorrence too deep, scarcely any imprecations too strong. Yet he was, withal, placable and ready to forgive.

This Psalm in particular exhibits with singular beauty and truth both sides of David's character. The same tenderness of natural affection, the same depth of feeling, which breathes

in every word of his elegy upon Jonathan, is here found chastened and elevated, as he pours out his soul toward God. It is the human heart which stretches out the arms of its affections, yearning, longing for the presence and love of Him who is more precious to it than life itself. This is the one side of the Psalm. The other is almost startling in the abruptness of its contrast, yet strikingly true and natural. It breathes the sternness, almost the fierceness, of the ancient warrior, hard beset by his enemies. From that lofty strain of heavenly musing with which the Psalm opens, he turns to utter his vow of vengeance against the traitors who are leagued against him ; he triumphs in the prospect of their destruction. P.

The Psalm consists of two parts, each exhibiting essentially the same succession of ideas. Both begin with the expression of intense desire for God's presence and communion with Him, and end with a confident anticipation of His mercy ; but in the first (vs. 1-8), this is supposed to be displayed in the deliverance of the Psalmist from his sufferings ; in the second (vs. 6-11), it is viewed as securing the destruction of his enemies. A.

Title. The contents of this Psalm fully verify its title. Like 61 and 62, it belongs to the time of Absalom's rebellion. More specifically it is connected with the sufferings of David and his followers while he tarried near the fords of the wilderness (2 Sam. 15 : 23, 28), in the region lying between the plain of Jericho and the northern shore of the Dead Sea. This is described as barren and desolate in the extreme. While here the band of exiles endured weariness and thirst (2 Sam. 16 : 2). In connection with v. 2, Delitzsch quotes Furrer : " Not a strip of grass refreshes the eye here upon the wide plain, not a brook ripples, except during the rainy season." The title is in accordance with the direction which the historian relates that David's flight took. " It throws light upon the whole Psalm and is verified by it. The poet is a king. He longs for God in Zion, where he has so gladly beheld Him who is there revealed. He is persecuted by enemies, who have aimed at his destruction. The assertion that he finds himself in the wilderness is no mere figure of speech ; and when he anticipates for his enemies that they shall become ' a portion for jackals ' (v. 11), we can easily discern the impression that the wilderness has had upon the shape taken by his thoughts." *De Witt.*

1. O God, Thou art my God. This permission to appropriate God is one of the most precious revelations of Scripture. Won-

derful as it may seem, God gives Himself to us. We talk of God's giving Himself in Christ as if that were some new gift. God had given Himself to men long before Christ came. Long before Jesus told men to pray "Our Father," the Psalmist had said, "*O God, Thou art my God.*" That little word "my" represents the eternal relation of God to His people; and if God is ours, then whatever in God is available for us is ours. V.—When God, the Perfect Being, loves the creature of His Hand, He cannot divide His love. He must perforce love with the whole directness, and strength, and intensity of His Being; for He is God, and therefore incapable of partial and imperfect action. He must give Himself to the single soul with as absolute a completeness as if there were no other being besides it. And, on his side, man knows that this gift of Himself by God is thus entire; and in no narrow spirit of ambitious egotism, but as grasping and representing the literal fact, he cries, "My God." Therefore when God had "so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believed in Him should not perish but have everlasting life," we find Paul writing to the Galatians as if his own single soul had been redeemed by the sacrifice of Calvary: "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." II. P. L.

Early will I seek Thee. The noun which signifies "the early morning" and the verb "to seek" are both from the same root, and are both to be referred to the same primitive idea. The meaning of the root is *to break in*, and hence this in the verb passes into the signification of *seeking* (earnestly), and in the noun *the dawn* is so called as that which *breaks in* upon the darkness. P.—The verb means to begin to seek and inquire early in the morning and therefore earnestly. D.

In this hour of extremest trial, when his own son heads a powerful rebellion, and hosts of his old friends forsake him and combine to sustain this uprising, his soul turns to his God as to his best and only capable Helper. "Thou art my God"—with a precious emphasis on "*my*;" I will seek Thee both early and earnestly—with the early dawn of morning, and as those do who are up betimes to indulge the most yearning desire of their heart. C.

My soul thirsteth for Thee. Think who it was that made this confession. He was the greatest king of a great nation, so magnificent in his royalty that he was made a type of the Almighty King to come, to whom all the kingdoms of the earth belong. He was the greatest poet, too, of a poetical people—singing

such hymns to his harp that the whole Church of God, for nearly three thousand years, down to this very day, has kept on repeating them as the ceaseless and inexhaustible liturgy of its worship because all its great ranks of intellects could make nothing like them. Such a man as this, a soldier, a monarch and a minstrel without a peer, feels himself weak and empty and thirsty before God. F. D. H.

My *flesh*, i.e., "my body," answering to "my soul" in the parallelism, and so describing the whole man. In that intense worship in which every thought, feeling, desire, affection are centred in the one true object of love, body and soul both take their part. It is as a living man, every pulse of his being filled with the love of God, that he responds to that love. And when he cries out "O God, Thou art my God," this is not merely an appropriation of God as the God of his worship and trust; it is the *heart of flesh* stretching out *its human affections* toward him who has a personal affection for his creature, and whose lovingkindness it knows to be better than life. *In a dry and weary land.* The language is figurative, and expresses the spiritual thirst and weariness of one who is shut out from God's presence in the sanctuary. P.

Immanuel Kant like David found two things to move his soul to awe, the starry heavens above his head and the moral nature in his breast. And it is just here in his moral and religious necessities that man is most conscious of a craving for that, for which in every age his better nature has cried out—namely, "the living God." It is because in our Lord we have found one clothed in our nature, but freed from our defects, that we, tempest-tossed by sin, exclaim with the great-souled Charles Kingsley, "I cannot live without the man Christ Jesus." The beauty of human life even at its best estate is a beauty which only makes the more evident to a thoughtful mind its marring. Like that matchless bust of Psyche in the museum of Naples, its beauty and its brokenness constitute our joint despair. What a joy it is to the soul, conscious alike of its dignity and its guilt, to behold in the gift of God's own Son one who both honors and saves. He took not on Himself, says the apostle, the nature of angels, but took upon Him the seed of Abraham. We are drawn toward Him by every tender and grateful tie. He reaches down; but that were not enough; did He not also reach up. Man, conscious of the bondage of his will, in every age and in every clime, seeks one whose left hand is laid upon his fetter and

whose right hand is laid upon God's throne. This one who might have assumed as something infinitely below Him the estate of heavenly messengers, stooped lower still, the apostle tells us, and became man. None but man can so draw out our hearts; none but God satisfy our craving after a higher life; and we find both in "the one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." *Interior.*

Upon those to whom God is a God, He bestows special favors; and those to whom God is a God, return special services to Him. So we find it to be all along in Scripture, as this David in another place: "Thou art my God, and I will praise Thee; Thou art my Lord, I will exalt Thee." And so here: "*Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee.*" The text is an expression not only of faith, but likewise of obedience. *T. Horton.*—It is a great thing to have grand views of God, to get some approach to an idea of the exceeding greatness of God. We go to God too much for what we want to get. We ought to go to God, and meditate upon Him, and worship Him for what He is in Himself—His attributes, His glory. Important as this is, it is of infinitely more importance to be able to say, "Thou art my God." This is faith. Nature can say, "O God;" but only the believer can say, "My God." To those who can say that, the last part of David's words and his firm resolve will come as a very easy and a necessary thing; they cannot help saying it: "Early will I seek Thee." For it is attraction that does it. The secret of all true religion is attraction. As soon as God is "my God," I cannot help coming nearer and nearer to Him; it is my necessity; it is my life. *J. V.*

In the truth that God has created us, we see much of the meaning of the Psalmist's words. But we see even more when we reflect that He has created us *for Himself*. That which would be selfishness in a creature is in the great Creator a necessary result of His solitary perfection. The knowledge and love of our Maker is not, like the indulgence of a sentiment or a taste, a matter of choice. For every man who looks God and life steadily in the face, it is a stern necessity. Not to serve God is to be in the moral world that which a deformity or monster is in the world of animal existence. It is not only to defy the claims of God. It is to ignore the plain demands of our inner being, to do violence to the highest guidance of our mysterious and complex life. . . . Is God the Author and the End of our existence? Is it a solemn truth that by the incarnation and death of the Everlasting Son we have been redeemed from dis-

obedience to the true law of our being, and that we are really free to serve our God? Is this redemption characterized by a prodigality of tenderness which must appeal, if to nothing higher, to our mere natural sense of generosity? Then we may not sit still, interested indeed but passive, as if these central and soul-stirring truths were addressed merely to our speculative faculties. There is such a thing as giving ourselves to God. It is not a beautiful but impracticable aspiration. Believe it, we can only glorify God by yielding ourselves to Him. No other attitude on our part does justice to His claims. Only when we have given ourselves to God do we know what it is indeed to pray, to speak to God with that trustful yet reverent familiarity which becomes children who feel that they have and can have no secrets to hide from their Father in heaven. Only when we have given ourselves to God do we know anything of the joy of an untroubled conscience, and of a true inward peace of soul, and of a moral assurance of salvation, through His most precious death, who makes our self-oblation an acceptable reality. In short, only when we have given ourselves to God does the full meaning of the Psalmist's words dawn upon us, "O God, Thou art my God." *H. P. L.*

We could be satisfied with no gifts from Him, however great and godlike, unless His love were in them—for in His love we have *Himself*. We feel that God, who has given a heart to man, must have a heart to meet it, else amid all His gifts we are orphans. Were He to cast down His redemption from an inaccessible throne, with a pride that cares not for thanks, or an indifference that despises affection, it would not be the redemption which our souls desire. But neither does He. His salvation does not coldly drop from His hand, it enters with His heart; and that heart is opened in the sympathy and sacrifice of the Son of God. The Sovereign of the universe wishes to be our friend and father, to satisfy the thirst of the soul, which longs to be pressed to an infinite heart. *Ker.*—He will be with us if we seek Him, and open our hearts to receive Him. What we want, and what He has promised, is His personal presence with ourselves. It is not His presence with the Church that will save us, but His presence in our own hearts. His presence with the Church—that is, with other Christians, will doubtless save them; but they are not our saviours, nor must we look for our safety from them. The point for us to seek is that He should be present with us; that our own personal faith should apprehend Him, our

own personal love cleave to Him. Then He is with us, and we with Him, then are we His and shall be His at the great day. *T. Arnold.*

"*They that seek Me early shall find Me.*" It is the spring seeds that make the richest harvests, and a God sought early will be a God found ever. J. V.—For those who with the Psalmist seek Him early and intensely, and who give Him the hopes of their youth and the strength of their manhood; for those who give intellect when it is now expanding to the full measure of its grasp, and affections when they have as yet lost nothing of their freshness and purity, and will when it has learned by obedience something of that freedom, and rectitude, and strength of movement in which its perfection consists; for a Samuel, for a David, for a Saul of Tarsus, for a Timothy, aye, for an Augustine, He prepares, even in this world, a lavish acknowledgment; He bestows on such as these a fulness of blessing, and joy, and peace, which the eye of nature hath not seen nor its ear heard, nor the unrenewed heart of man conceived to tell. *H. P. L.*

2. The Hebrew has, Thus have I contemplated Thee in the sanctuary, to behold Thy strength and Thy glory. The meaning appears to be, The devout feelings which now possess me are the same as those with which I was animated when I worshipped in the sanctuary, and realized the strength and glory symbolized by the ark of the covenant. *Cook.*

"*I have seen Thee.*" We cannot see the essence of God, but we see Him, in seeing by faith His attributes and perfections. These sights David here pleases himself with the remembrance of; those were precious minutes which he spent in communion with God, he loved to think them over again; these he lamented the loss of, and longed to be restored to. *H.*—

In the sanctuary. The devotions of the sanctuary exert and are designed to exert no small influence on those of the closet and the family. The lamp of personal or domestic piety will send forth but a dim and sickly ray, unless trimmed and replenished by frequent visits to the house of the Lord. If the Psalmist David poured forth the sweetest and warmest strains of devotion in the wilderness of Judea and in the forest of Hareth, we must go back, for the secret of his high and holy inspiration, to the days when he trod the courts of the temple—days which caused his soul still to long for the courts of the Lord. If we would rise to true elevation of heart in the closet, we must "lift up our hands in the sanctuary." *Symington.*

3. The first clause gives a reason for the strong desire expressed in the foregoing verses, *for Thy favor is better than life*, and the last clause merely add a pledge of thankful acknowledgment, *my lips shall praise Thee. Better than life*, not merely than the life I now live, which was scarcely entitled to be so considered, but better than any life I could live, destitute of God's favor, which is therefore more than a sufficient substitute or compensation. *A.*—God's grace is better than life, better than natural life, which is also a blessing and as the presupposition of all earthly blessings, a very great blessing. God's grace, however, is a greater blessing, it is the *summum bonum* and the true life; this God of grace his lips shall praise, his morning song is of Him; for that which makes him truly blessed, and after which he even now, as heretofore, only and solely longs, is the grace of this God, the infinite value of which is to be measured by the greatness of His power and glory. *D.*

The Scriptures propose the fellowship of God as the consummation of felicity. We may concentrate upon Him all the faculties of our nature. He can evoke their intensest activities, give them full scope and never put a period to their flow. *Thornwell.*—*The Divine blessing in a single word is life.* Life embraces all good things that pertain to earthly prosperity. But it is not these earthly benefits *in themselves* that make up life. They are good things only when the possession of them is united with the experience of the gracious presence of the covenant God, so that they are pledges of His favor. Hence David (Psalm 4:8) says that he would not exchange his heart's delight in God for the abundance of the godless (16:2, 5); he praises Jehovah as the highest good; and here he says, "Thy favor is better than life." *O.*

God's favor includes and bestows all that is desirable in the life that now is and in that which is to come, for God Himself is the great want of the human soul. Not merely as from His present, protecting, preserving, supplying providence He metes out to us with unsparing hand all needful temporal bounty, not merely as He hath given in the world around us all that can minister delight to the sense, all that feeds and clothes the body, as He rears our dwellings and establishes for us therein our family circles, as He rewards our industry with the means of personal and home comforts, not merely as He watches over us by night and day, as He giveth us all outward blessings richly to enjoy—but as the God of all grace, He ministers more largely and blessedly to every want of our souls, as He

bestows upon us, through the blood of His Son and the quickening energy of His Spirit, pardon, peace, holiness, and the joyful hope of eternal fellowship with Him in heaven. These are the great need of every human soul. These rich, inestimable gifts of His grace for which all other gifts are but subordinate, these which flow from His favor only, these include all that is desirable to every soul. This is the grand truth which sums up all truth. In God's favor is life, all that is to be desired and sought, all that can be possessed and enjoyed here and forevermore. And nothing that is known from human observation or experience can fix a doubt or question upon this truth. Its proofs are so many, so conclusive, that no objection drawn from the admitted mysteries of providence, from any of the darkest facts of human experience can lie against it. Without it, deny it, and what is existence, what is man? Whence he came, wherefore he lives, and whither bound, none can tell. Without it *all, all* is a dark, utterly insoluble problem. B.

If the excellence of others may become mine, as I cannot tell how or why, save that I love them, am in them and they in me in a sort of mingled life, what may I not become when God, in whom all beauty and all that should be loved has its original and perfection, is the object on which my thoughts attend by day and by night; when He deigns to dwell in me, as spirit only can dwell in spirit, richly by His fruits and virtues, perfecting His strength in the conscious want of mine; when He calls and I hear, yea, speaks as with a brother's voice, and face to face in Jesus Christ, revealing Himself to my sympathies, my sight, my faith, as all in all? Here is a companionship one would think sufficient to preserve us from the corruption of the world, to awe down the rising of evil within us, and rewarding our devotion with such strong consolation as should beguile us of the sense of sorrow and overmaster all inferior attachments. H. H.

4. The connection between the first four verses is not very exact, but may be traced as follows: My soul longeth for Thee (v. 1). With the same longing with which I now desire to see Thee, I once did see Thee in Thy sanctuary (v. 2). This longing is because of Thy lovingkindness, which is more precious than all else (v. 3). Accordingly, I will praise Thee all my life long (v. 4). P.

Thus, i.e., with the same ardent desire as before expressed, he feels himself summoned to praise, which shall continue as long as life lasts. The highest expression of a truly renewed soul

is the habit of earnest, grateful praise. But it is a privilege as well as a duty; and so the next couplet compares it to the joy of a rich and splendid banquet. Even in the arid wastes of the wilderness he is as much refreshed as he could be by the richest and most savory food; and his lips burst forth into jubilant song, the natural, necessary utterance of a joyful spirit. T. W. C.

Those that have their hearts refreshed with the tokens of God's favor ought to have them enlarged in His praises. A great deal of reason we have to bless God that we have better provisions and better possessions than the wealth of this world can afford us; and that in the service of God and in communion with Him, we have better employments and better enjoyments than we can have in the business and converse of this world. H.—When the soul has found God in Christ, who is its life, its glory, its treasure, its heaven, its all, not only are the lips opened in praise, the tongue loosed to speak of the glory of Jesus; but the life, the practice, the conversation, will also be savored with the grace of truth, as an evidence that we know His love, and have been with Jesus. W. Mason.

My mouth shall praise Thee. Prayer is not only—perhaps in some of the holiest souls it is not chiefly—a petition for something we want and do not possess. In the larger sense of the word, as the spiritual language of the soul, prayer is intercourse with God, often seeking no end beyond the pleasure of such intercourse. It is praise; it is adoration; it is a colloquy in which the soul engages with the All-wise and the All-holy. When we seek the company of our friends, we do not seek it simply with the view of getting something from them. It is a pleasure to be with them, to be in possession of their sympathies and showing our delight at it; to be assuring them of their place in our hearts and thoughts. So it is with the soul, when dealing with the Friend of friends—with God. In this sense of spiritual intercourse with God, it is clear that as to much prayer the question whether it is answered can never arise, for the simple reason that no answer is asked for. H. P. L.

In nothing is the Christian's progress in holiness more signally manifest than in his prayers. They become more and more the natural expression of the new life. Christ being more completely formed within, the believer's seasons of communion with the Father spread themselves more widely through his days and nights. He passes very frequently, almost un-

consciously, and by imperceptible gradations of feeling, from his ordinary existence among the things of this world into direct converse with that Friend who is ever nearest, while also most high and most mighty. The current of adoring thought flows on in joyous, satisfying concord with the Eternal Will. We do not stop, perhaps, to shape every aspiration into articulate speech, but we yield to the Divine breath, and move whithersoever the Spirit that maketh intercession moves. In such measure as may be, the disciple is in the Mount with the Master. And a larger and larger part of devotion will consist in thanksgiving and praise, a sure mark of spiritual growth. F. D. H.

5. "*My soul shall be satisfied with fatness and fatness;*" so the Hebrew hath it—that is, my soul shall be filled up to the brim with pleasure and delight, in the remembrance and enjoyment of God. T. Brooks.—The fulfilment is cotemporaneous with the desire. In the one breath, "my soul thirsteth;" in the next, "my soul is satisfied"—as when in tropical lands the rain comes, and in a day or two what had been baked earth is rich meadow, and the dry torrent-beds, where the white stones glistened in the sunshine, foam with rushing waters and are edged with budding willows. The fulness of satisfaction when God fills the soul is vividly expressed in the familiar image of the feast of "marrow and fatness," on which he banquets even while hungry in the desert. The abundant delights of fellowship with God make him insensible to external privations, are drink for him thirsty, food for his hunger, a home in his wanderings, a source of joy and music in the midst of much that is depressing: "My mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips." A. M.

The earthly child of his heavenly Father finds his capacity for happiness filled to the utmost only when he is at the fountain-head. He is happy when employed on the works of God, or in performing the lowliest duties which are laid upon him here; but still the great want of his soul is unsatisfied. His most intense desires are not appeased. He is not at home till he can rest in God with the most entire complacency; till he can contemplate with calm satisfaction, and, sometimes, with almost insupportable delight, the Divine attributes, while his feelings outrun his thoughts, and delightfully anticipate the great central *rest* to which they converge. B. B. E.

To feel as if you were in the company of God, to have delight in this feeling, to triumph in God as you would in a treasure that had

come into your possession, to dwell upon Him as one friend dwells in pleasing remembrance on another, to find that the minutes spent in communion with the heavenly and unseen Witness are far the sweetest and the sunniest of your earthly pilgrimage, to have a sense of God all the day long, and that sense of Him in every way so delicious as to make the creature seem vain and tasteless in the comparison, to have His candle shining in your heart, and a secret beatitude in Him of which other men have no comprehension, to bear about with you that cheerful trust in Him, and that cherished regard to Him, which children do to a father whose love they rejoice in, and of whose good will they are most thoroughly assured, to prize the peaceful Sabbaths and the sacred retirements when your soul can wing its contemplation toward His sanctuary and there behold new glories of His character at the very time that you can exult in confidence before Him—thus to be affected toward God, and thus to glory and be glad in Him, is certainly not a common attainment; and yet we do not see how any true saint, any genuine disciple, can be altogether a stranger to it. Chalmers.

6. When I call Thee to mind upon my bed, then in the night-watches, or throughout the night-watches, I meditate on Thee, *i.e.*, it is no fugitive recollection, but it so holds me that I spend a great portion of the night absorbed in meditation on Thee. Matter for meditation is not wanting to him, for God has become his help; He has rescued him and brought him into this wilderness; and, carefully hidden under the shadow of His wings which affords him coolness in the heat of conflict and protection from his persecutors. D.—David frequently speaks of night as the season for devout meditation (see Psalms 4:4; 16:7). In this passage there is evidently a direct reference to that first long night of peril and watchfulness. In the night-watches David turned to God in prayer, and received the support of which he speaks in the next verse. Cook.

Observe the connection. Meditation turns the promises into marrow, it conveys the strength of them to our souls. One morsel of meat masticated and digested dispenses more nourishment than a greater quantity that is swallowed down whole; so one promise that is ruminated upon and digested by meditation, conveys more comfort than a bundle of promises in the head that are not meditated upon, which we do not consider. The comfort which meditation brings is the most spiritual, refined joy that we are capable of. It is spiritual medi-

tation which rejoices the angelical part of our souls within us. He that performs conscientiously the duty of meditation doth maintain such a correspondence with God as angels do ; such a one doth enter into heaven by degrees and steps. *Salter.*

How shall we fill the chambers of *meditation* ? The soul never sits alone within her retreat. She invites some congenial companionship. She is not altogether mistress of that retirement. Thoughts she cannot welcome will sometimes obtrude their presence. But, for the most part, she chooses her fellowships. She calls in the thoughts in whose silent circle she finds most agreeable communion. And then, in such alliance, a swift process of assimilation goes on. The soul becomes like her chosen intimates. She takes on the hue and character of those objects with which she is most at home. And here is another item in the final reckoning : We must answer for these intimacies of thought. *A. L. Stone.*

Meditation is the life of the soul ; action is the soul of meditation ; honor is the reward of action. So meditate that thou mayest do ; so do that thou mayest receive honor, for which give God the glory. *Quarles.*

7. "*Because Thou hast been my Help*, when other helps and helpers failed me, therefore I will still rejoice in Thy salvation, will trust in Thee for the future, and will do it with delight and holy joy. Thou hast been not only my Helper, but my Help ;" for we could never have helped ourselves, nor could any creature have been helpful to us, but by Him. Here we may set up our Ebenezer, saying, *Hitherto the Lord has helped us*, and must therefore resolve that we will never desert Him, never distrust Him, nor ever droop in our walking with Him. H.

In the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice. The shadow of God's wing is a safe shadow. Creep closer under it, closer yet. Earth has nothing human so gentle as true mother-love ; but God's wing that folds down over you is gentler than even mother-love, and you can never get out from beneath it. You need never be afraid while resting there. In all the universe there is no harm that can come nigh you. J. R. M.

8. *My soul cleaves after Thee, Thy right hand holds me.* This is a strong metaphorical description of the mutual relation between God and the believer ; a relation of trustful dependence on the one hand, and of constant favor and protection on the other. *Cleaves after* is a frequent phrase for *follows cleaving to thee*. The right hand is the constant symbol of strength. A.

—The soul follows after God and cleaves to Him (the expression in the Hebrew is literally, "My soul hath cleaved after Thee," so that the two ideas of following and cleaving are mingled) ; and God, on the other hand, stays and upholds the soul with His right hand. Out of that hand of power and love neither man nor devil can pluck it. P.

The first clause describes the cleaving of the soul to God, the second God's steadfast support of the soul ; a reciprocal action and reaction ; prevenient grace first draws out the spiritual affection, then follows the assurance of support. *Cook.*—In the first verse we read, "My soul thirsteth for Thee ;" in the fifth verse, "My soul shall be satisfied ;" in the eighth verse, "My soul followeth hard after Thee." These three points are the turning-points of the Psalm ; and they show us the soul longing, the longing soul satisfied, and the satisfied soul still seeking. The word translated "followeth" here literally means to cleave or to cling. "My soul cleaveth after God." Desire expands the heart ; possession expands the heart. More of God comes when we can hold more of Him, and the end of all fruition is the renewed desire after further fruition. There is also very beautifully here the co-operation and reciprocal action of the seeking soul and the sustaining God. We hold and are held. The Psalm is a transcript of the passage of a believing soul from longing through fruition to firm trust, in which it is sustained by the right hand of God. A. M.

To press hard after God is to follow Him close, as those that are afraid of losing the sight of Him and that long to be with Him. This David did, and he owns to the glory of God, *Thy right hand upholds me*. God upheld him in his holy desires and pursuits, that he might not grow weary in well-doing. Those that follow hard after God would soon fail and give off if God's right hand did not uphold them. It is He that strengthens us in the pursuit of Him, quickens our good affections, and comforts us while we have not yet attained what we are in the pursuit of. This was a great encouragement to the Psalmist to hope that He would in due time give him that which he so earnestly desired, because He had by His grace wrought in him those desires and kept them up. H.

9. *And they to (their) ruin are seeking my soul ; they shall go into the depths of the earth.* The phrase *to ruin* has precisely the same sense as in Psalm 35 : 8—namely, to their own destruction. *Are seeking*, will seek ; the idea

suggested by the future is, that if they still persist in seeking it, they will do so to their own destruction. To seek the soul implies a purpose of destruction, without any qualifying adjunct, even in prose. The *depths of the earth*, literally, its lower or lowest parts, which may simply mean the grave (as we say *under ground*), or contain an allusion to the fate of Korah and his company. A.

9, 10. Upon our modern feelings and thoughts these verses seem, perhaps, somewhat to jar. We pass all at once into a different atmosphere. We have come down from the mount of holy aspirations into the common every-day world, where human enemies are struggling and human passions are strong. Yet this very transition, harsh as it is, gives us a wonderful sense of reality. In some respects it brings the Psalm nearer to our own level. The man who has been pouring out the fervent affection of his heart toward God is no mystic or recluse, lost in ecstatic contemplation, but one who is fighting a battle with foes of flesh and blood, and who hopes to see their malice defeated, their power crushed, and their carcasses left to be the prey of jackals in the wilderness. What may be called the human force of character remains even amid thoughts whose impassioned earnestness is not of this world, and whose strain of intensely exalted spiritual fervor is such as but very few can reach. P.

David's enemies are God's enemies, and their success would frustrate His holy and gracious purposes. And therefore in the midst of the Psalmist's exalted spiritual fervor, he can turn aside to set forth their sure and deserved overthrow. It shows us that David was not the victim of a weak sentimentality, but the possessor of a robust faith which took in the whole nature of God, His justice as well as His mercy, and apprehended the sterner as well as the milder of His perfections. Such Psalms as this one are of immense service in days like our own, when the moral fibre of Christians is weakened, and they speak with bated breath of the wrath to come, and fear lest any reference to the doom of the impenitent should sound harsh. For here we see by actual example that the very highest joy in God, the closest communion with Him, can and does coexist with a calm and deliberate approval of the surrender of His foes to the overthrow which their conduct has provoked. T. W. C.

11. Every one that sweareth by Him—i.e., every one to whom God is the object of religious fear and trust and worship, the Psalmist himself and his friends and companions. Those on the other hand who, because

they have no fear of God, seek to prevail by lies, shall be confounded. P.

The healthy Christian life finds its inspiration, not in contemplating its own spiritual states, but in beholding Christ. In the memoirs of most successful missionaries we find little record of subjective experiences. They were absorbed in viewing the needs of men and the love of Christ. They spent not much time in gauging their faith. They were looking unto Jesus, the beginner and completer of it. A. E. Dunning.

Penitence is the first movement to mercy, and confession to God is the first step upward. Were you satisfied with self that would be death; pain is the evidence of vitality, the outcry and alarm-bell of the sinning conscience. Take heart from it. The holiest saints on earth and in Paradise have had a poor sense of their own advancement. The true way to get comfort is to look away from yourself to Him. Our power, our light, our satisfaction, our better life itself, are in Him, and to Him we must go, and go again and again for them, not to ourselves. God grant us just discontent enough with what we are to stir and nerve us for harder and nobler labor, not so much as to depress our energies or darken our daylight! The best reply you can make to your reproachful memory, charging you with meagre attainments and slow progress, is that you will stop measuring yourself by yourself, drop the bad habit of prying about in the interior of your own weak heart for satisfaction which can come only from a higher source. Look unto the hills of God, whence comes your help, and forgetting the things which are behind reach on to better things before. F. D. H.

David, Jacob, and Paul, may be considered the three great patterns of thankfulness which are set before us in Scripture; saints, all of whom were peculiarly the creation of God's grace, and whose very life and breath it was humbly and adoringly to meditate upon the contrast between what, in different ways, they had been and what they were. A perishing wanderer had unexpectedly become a patriarch; a shepherd, a king; and a persecutor an apostle; each had been chosen, at God's inscrutable pleasure, to fulfil a great purpose, and each, while he did his utmost to fulfil it, kept praising God that he was made His instrument. Of the first, it was said, "Jacob have I loved;" of the second, that He chose David also His servant, and took him away from the sheepfolds. And Paul says of himself, "Last of all, He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." Newman.

PSALM LXIV.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN. A PSALM OF DAVID.

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| <p>1 HEAR my voice, O God, in my complaint :
Preserve my life from fear of the enemy.</p> <p>2 Hide me from the secret counsel of evil-doers ;
From the tumult of the workers of iniquity :</p> <p>3 Who have whet their tongue like a sword,
And have aimed their arrows, even bitter words :</p> <p>4 That they may shoot in secret places at the perfect :
Suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not.</p> <p>5 They encourage themselves in an evil purpose ;
They commune of laying snares privily ;
They say, Who shall see them ?</p> | <p>6 They search out iniquities ; We have perfected <i>say they</i>, a well-devised scheme,
And the inward thought of every one, and the heart, is deep.</p> <p>7 But God shall shoot at them ;
With an arrow suddenly shall they be wounded.</p> <p>8 So they shall be made to stumble, their own tongue being against them :
All that see them shall shake the head.</p> <p>9 And all men shall fear ;
And they shall declare the work of God,
And shall wisely consider of his doing.</p> <p>10 The righteous shall be glad in the LORD,
and shall trust in him ;
And all the upright in heart shall glory.</p> |
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THIS Psalm contains a stirring and vigorous picture of the plotting by which evil men were aiming at the Psalmist's life. It opens, as is usual in such Psalms, with a cry to God against their machinations ; it describes at length the methods they take to accomplish their purposes ; and it concludes with a confident prediction of their sudden and utter overthrow. We have already observed a similar strain of feeling in other Psalms, such as the fifty-second, fifty-seventh, fifty-eighth, and fifty-ninth. In all these we find allusions to the mischief done by *the tongue* of the wicked ; in the last three the same figures are employed, the tongue and its words being compared to arrows and swords. P.

In this Psalm the central theme is the counsellings of his enemies against him ; the secrecy and malignity of their plots ; their exultation in the assurance of success, coupled with God's swift and terrible retribution under which their schemes recoiled fatally upon themselves—from which result the nation learned something more of God, and the righteous rejoiced with great joy. C.—It is a cry of God's elect, when persecuted for righteousness' sake, to their Deliverer and sure Avenger. The general principle stated is very clear. The Psalm will adjust itself, as an experimental utterance, to the lips of Christian faith whenever brought into contact with the evil forces of the prince

of this world, so as to suffer affliction for the Gospel's sake ; for it expresses the condition and the hope of one actually imperilled for the truth. *Arthur Pridham.*

3. Their arrows, even bitter words.

They dart their calumnies as archers shoot their poisoned arrows. To sting, to inflict anguish, to destroy, is their one design. Insult, sarcasm, taunting defiance, all these were practised among Orientals as a kind of art ; and if in these western regions, with more refined manners, we are less addicted to the use of rough abuse, it is yet to be feared that the less apparent venom of the tongue inflicts none the less poignant pain. David had but the one resource of prayer against the twofold weapons of the wicked ; for defence against sword or arrow he used the one defence of faith in God. S.

5, 6. These verses carry on the picture of the plots of these evil men, and especially describe their resolute persistence in their schemes, their confidence of success, and the depth and subtlety of their designs. P.

6. *They search out iniquities ; (they say) We are ready—a consummate plan ! and the inward thought and heart of (every) man (is) deep.* They rack their invention and ransack their memory for modes of doing mischief. *We are ready*, literally, *finished*, just as we might say in English, *we are done*. The last clause is added to

enhance the danger, by representing the device as springing not from shallow, superficial, but profound contrivance. *Inward thought*, literally, *inside*, an equivalent to *heart* often used by David. A.

7. The Divine judgment is now painted as if actually fulfilling itself before the very eyes of the Psalmist. Hence the verbs are in the past tense, by which a certain dramatic effect is produced, which is lost when they are rendered in the future. So vividly is the Divine judgment anticipated, that it is *as if* already accomplished.

P. — *But God has shot them—with an arrow—suddenly—the wounds are theirs.* By an abrupt but beautiful transition he describes the tables as completely turned upon the enemy, as they are about to shoot an arrow suddenly at the righteous, God shoots an arrow suddenly at them. The wounds which they intended to inflict on others have become their own. When they thought to strike others they were struck themselves. A.

8. Their own tongue against them.

It is written that “every idle word shall be brought into judgment.” Light words weigh heavy in God’s balances. They are *punished*; “*their own tongue shall be against them.*” Better a mountain should fall on us than our

own guilty tongue in the day of judgment! Do we boast—do we revile—do we insult—do we jeer at holy things or godly people with an unbridled tongue? Then God will make it a rod to scourge us with. The tongue is called the glory of man in the Psalms, “Awake my glory.” It was the glory of his tongue to praise his God. But when the tongue is debased to vile uses and purposes, then it becomes our shame and disgrace, and not our glory. T. M.

9. **Shall wisely consider of his doing.** The judgments of God are frequently so clear and manifest that men cannot misread them, and if they have any thought at all, they must extract the true teaching from them. S.

10. The Divine deed, patent to all, of judicial retribution, becomes a blessing to humanity. Passed on from mouth to mouth it becomes a warning. For the righteous in particular it becomes a consoling and joyous confirmation of faith. The righteous rejoices in his God, who by judging and redeeming in this fashion makes history the history of redemption; with so much the more confidence he hides himself in Him; and all the upright glory in God, who looks into the heart, and in deeds acknowledges those whose heart is conformed to Him. D.

PSALM LXV.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN. A PSALM. A SONG OF DAVID.

- 1 PRAISE waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion :
And unto thee shall the vow be performed.
- 2 O thou that hearest prayer,
Unto thee shall all flesh come.
- 3 Iniquities prevail against me :
As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge
them away [*forgive them. Am. Com.*].
- 4 Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and
causest to approach *unto thee*,
That he may dwell in thy courts :
We shall be satisfied with the goodness of
thy house,
The holy place of thy temple.
- 5 By terrible things thou wilt answer us in
righteousness,
O God of our salvation ;

- Thou that art the confidence of all the ends
of the earth,
And of them that are afar off upon the sea :
- 6 Which by his strength setteth fast the moun-
tains ;
Being girded about with might .
- 7 Which stilleth the roaring of the seas, the
roaring of their waves,
And the tumult of the peoples.
- 8 They also that dwell in the uttermost parts
are afraid at thy tokens :
Thou makest the outgoings of the morning
and evening to rejoice.
- 9 Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it,
Thou greatly enrichest it ;
The river of God is full of water :

Thou providest them corn, when thou hast
so prepared the earth.
10 Thou waterest her furrows abundantly
Thou settlest the ridges thereof :
Thou makest it soft with showers ;
Thou blessest the springing thereof.
11 Thou crownest the year with thy goodness ;

And thy paths drop fatness.
12 They drop upon the pastures of the wilder-
ness :
And the hills are girded with joy.
13 The pastures are clothed with flocks ;
The valleys also are covered over with corn ;
They shout for joy, they also sing.

WE can hardly doubt that this Psalm was composed on the occasion of an abundant harvest, and was intended to be sung as a hymn of thanksgiving by the whole congregation gathered before God in Zion. From the allusions in vs. 7, 8 it would seem that the time was one of great political convulsions, of a shaking of nations and kingdoms, in the midst of which God had manifested His goodness to His people. The Psalm connects together these two great concurrent instances of God's protecting care and love. He had given peace to Zion when her enemies were raging around her. He had crowned her with the year of His goodness when drought and famine seemed to threaten. "The Hearer of prayer" had heard the petitions of His people, when they met to confess their sins and to make known their need before Him ; and now it was but fitting that they should gather again within His courts, there to thank Him for His mercy, and to show forth all His praise. This twofold character of the Psalm is best explained by referring it to the time immediately subsequent to the destruction of the Assyrian army before Jerusalem. An abundant harvest, it had been promised (Isa. 37 : 30), should follow that event ; and the fields so lately trampled beneath the feet of the invader seemed now, with their waving crops, to sing and shout for joy. The title of the Psalm assigns it to David ; but it is impossible to read it, and not to feel that it bears every evidence of a later date. So strong indeed is this evidence that even Delitzsch, who is usually a strenuous supporter of the inscriptions, abandons the tradition here, and, with Ewald, thinks that the Psalm was written about the time of Sennacherib's overthrow (*i.e.*, about 712 B.C.).

The Psalm consists of three strophes : The opening is an expression of the thoughts and feelings with which the congregation may fitly approach God, now that they come to thank Him for His goodness (vs. 1-4). Then follows the celebration of the mighty acts of Jehovah, both in the world of nature and also among the nations, so that His name is known and acknowledged to the ends of the earth (vs. 5-8).

Lastly, the special thanksgiving which is called forth by the refreshing rain which God has sent, and the rich and glorious harvest which is already waving and ripening before their eyes (vs. 9-13).

The difference between the first and last strophe in the mode of expression is striking. In the first, there is a certain abruptness. The thoughts follow one another, not indeed altogether without order, but without anything like formal cohesion. In the last, on the other hand, the language flows with the thoughts. The bright harvest-scene is before the eyes of the inspired singer. He stands looking on the fields white already to the harvest, and his soul within him rejoices in their glorious promise. The poet and the world without him are at one accord. The fulness of joy in his heart, as he sees how his God has poured blessing upon the land, passes as it were by a contagion of sunny gladness into the inanimate creation, and the very corn-fields seem to him to shout together, yea to sing for joy. P.

The Psalm loses none of its rare beauty by reason of our uncertainty as to its original adaptation. We may take its sweet words and apply them to very many of the varied scenes of ever shifting human life ; for when is God other or less than the Infinite Fountain of all blessings ! C.

1-4. In these verses, while the meaning of the separate sentences is clear, it is not equally easy to trace the line of thought. I believe it to be this : In Zion God is known, there He is praised and worshipped. He is the hearer of prayer ; that is His very character, and therefore all flesh comes to Him. All who feel their weakness, all who need help and grace, seek it at His hand. It is true that they who thus come come with the burden of sin upon them ; their iniquities rise up in all their strength and might, and would thrust them away from the presence of the Holy One. But He Himself, in the plenitude of His mercy, covers those iniquities, will not look upon them, and so suffers sinners to approach Him. And how blessed are they who, reconciled and pardoned, are thus suffered to draw nigh. Of that blessedness

may we ourselves be partakers, may we be filled and satisfied therewith. P.

1. According to our Hebrew text, the word translated "waiteth" is a noun, used often in the sense of *silence*; here, of silent *trust*. "To Thee, O God, belong silent trust and grateful praise; these become Thee and Thou art worthy to receive them from Thy worshippers in Zion." "To Thee let the vow be performed." C.—This is a song of joyful thank giving for great prosperity, and the vow the singers are performing is that bringing an offering from the fruits of the earth with loud and cheerful praise. *De Witt*.

2. *Hearer of prayer, up to Thee shall all flesh come.* Thou who habitually hearest prayer. This is mentioned as one of the Divine characters or attributes. *Up to Thee*, even to Thee, implying actual arrival, and therefore a stronger expression than *unto Thee*. *All flesh* is here used in its narrower sense of all mankind. To Thee they shall come, *i.e.*, must come, for the supply of their necessities, the forgiveness of their sins, and, in short, for every good and perfect gift, both temporal and spiritual. A.

Thou that hearest prayer. This is Thy name, Thy nature, Thy glory. God not only has heard, but is now hearing prayer, and always must hear prayer, since He is an immutable being, and never changes in His attributes. Every right and sincere prayer is as surely heard as it is offered. S.—He never rejects any that deserves the name of prayer, how weak, how unworthy soever the petitioner be. "Thou art plenteous in mercy to all that call upon Thee;" "A rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." This must be believed as certainly as we believe that God is. As sure as God is the true God, so sure is it that none who sought Him diligently departed from Him without a reward. You may as well doubt that He is God, as doubt that He will hear prayer. *Clarkson*.

If God be not merely an infinite Intelligence, but a moral Being, a mighty Heart, so that justice and mercy and tenderness are attributes of His character, then to appeal to Him in virtue of these attributes is assuredly to appeal to Him to some purpose. If an omnipresent Intelligence is a sufficient guarantee of His being able to hear us; an interest such as justice and mercy imply toward creatures dependent upon Him for life and its continuance, is a guarantee of His willingness to do so. It is on this ground that God is said to hear prayer in Holy Scripture. That He should do so follows from the reality of His nature as God. H. P. L.

Therefore, because Thou art a God hearing prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come; justly does every man's praise wait for Thee, because every man's prayer waits on Thee, when he is in want or distress, whatever he does at other times. H.—Unto God, so well known as the Hearer of prayer, let all the needy come! And their prayer having been answered, let them come yet again with their grateful thank-offering! C.

Prayer is a term of great latitude, involving the whole compass of our intercourse with God. Paul represents it to include our adoration of His perfections; our acknowledgment of the wisdom of His dispensations, and of our obligations for His benefits, providential and spiritual; the avowal of our entire dependence on Him, and of our absolute subjection to Him; the declaration of our faith in Him; the expression of our devotedness to Him; the confession of our own unworthiness, infirmities, and sins; the petition for the supply of our wants, and for the pardon of our offences, for succors in our distress, for a blessing on our undertakings, for the direction of our conduct and the success of our affairs. H. *More*.

An argument for the reasonableness of prayer is based on the unchangeable character of God. It is precisely because God's character is unchangeable that His purposes are flexible. It is because He is a just God that He is a Saviour—*i.e.*, that He adapts His providence to the changing characters with which it has to deal. He treats differently those who treat Him differently, and this precisely because He is in Himself the same and changes not. If God does not grant every prayer, it is because He knows what is good for us far too well to do so. We must offer all our prayers for temporal blessings with due submission to God's better wisdom. "Not my will, but Thine, be done." Only one prayer needs no such qualification; the prayer for that Holy Spirit which, in the Christian doctrine, is the direct influence of the Deity on the spirits He has created, bestowing on them the highest wisdom, purifying them even as He, the fountain of purity, is pure. C. P. *Reichel*.

3. *Words of iniquities are too strong for me; (as for) our transgressions, Thou wilt expiate them, or forgive them for the sake of an atonement.* A.—**Iniquities prevail.** "Are too strong for me." It is the remembrance of this which brings up before the mind the one great obstacle to approach to God; the next line telling us how that obstacle is removed. Calvin well explains: "Although our iniqui-

ties, as they deserve repulse, would cast us far from Thy sight, yet because Thou showest Thyself ready to be reconciled, they will not prevent the course of our prayers." P.

Despair of self is the mother of confidence in God ; and no man has learned the blessedness and the sweetness of God's power to cleanse who has not learned the impotence of his own feeble attempts to overcome his transgression. So here we have the hopelessness and misery of man's vain struggles, and side by side the joyful confidence in the Divine victory. We have the problem and the solution, the barrier and the overleaping of it ; man's impotence and the omnipotence of God's mercy. A. M.

As for our transgressions, Thou shalt purge them away. In the Hebrew it is, Thou shalt hide them. It alludes to the mercy-seat, which was covered with the wings of the cherubim ; so are the sins of the godly, when repented of, covered with the wings of mercy and favor. *Thomas Watson.*—The pronoun is emphatic, as though to express the conviction that God and God alone could do this. P.

4. *Happy* (he whom) *Thou wilt choose and bring* (him) *near, i.e.,* admit him to Thy presence and to intimate communion with Thee (so that) *he shall inhabit Thy courts ; we shall be sated, satisfied or filled, with the good, i.e.,* the pleasure, the enjoyment, *of Thy house, the holy* (place) *Thy temple,* or Thy holy temple, Thy sanctuary, an expression used both of the tabernacle and the temple properly so called. The privilege described is not merely that of public worship at the place of God's appointment, but of residence in His family and participation in the privileges of His household. A.

Be satisfied. For all that God's grace offers us we can give no better thanks than that we hunger and thirst after it, and that the poor empty soul be satisfied therewith. D.—What can be wanting in the house of Him who made everything, who is the master of everything, who will be all unto all, in whom is an inexhaustible treasure of good. Of Him is said "Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things." *Bellarmino.*

We are chosen of God, and this alone is blessedness. Then He works graciously in us and attracts us powerfully ; this also is blessedness. Furthermore, we by His Divine drawings are made nigh by the blood of His Son, and brought near by His Spirit into intimate fellowship ; so that we have access with boldness ; here also is unrivalled blessedness. To crown all, we approach as chosen and accepted ones, to become

dwellers in the Divine household ; this is heaped-up blessedness, vast beyond conception. Such is the portion of every man whom God has chosen and caused to approach unto Him, though once his iniquities prevailed against him. S.

5. The Psalmist now approaches more nearly to his main subject ; and first, he declares God's wonders on behalf of His people. P.

Beautifully is He said to be "the confidence of all the ends of the earth"—worthy to be trusted by people of every nation, every clime under the whole heavens ! C.—The meaning is that God is the most certain help and defence of men, whether He be acknowledged by them and trusted in or not. *Venema.*—Here, as in v. 2, it is the *claim* of God to be thus recognized and trusted in which is asserted. God is the hearer of the prayers of all. He is the only object of trust, even though all do not pray to Him or trust in Him. As Luther well says : "One may run over the wide world, even to its utmost extremity, yet Thou art the only foundation on which the trust of a man's heart can rest." P.

6, 7. In the world of nature and of men He proves Himself to be the one girt about with power, to whom everything must be submissive. He, the Creator, Preserver, and Ruler of the world, He it is that establishes the mountains and stills the roaring of the ocean. D.—Is not the evidence of ease on the very front of all the greatest works in existence ? Do they not say plainly to us, not "There has been a great *effort* here," but "There has been a great *power* here" ? It is not the weariness of mortality, but the strength of Divinity, which we have to recognize in all mighty things. *Ruskin.*

It is true, in the strict sense, that God stills the raging of the seas ; but it is also true that He subdues the commotion of human societies and states, of which the sea is a natural and common emblem. Hence he adds in express terms, *the tumult of nations.* A.—Human society owes its preservation to the continued power of God ; evil passions would secure its instant dissolution ; envy, ambition, and cruelty would create anarchy to-morrow, if God did not prevent. Glory be unto God who maintains the fabric of social order, and checks the wicked, who would fain overthrow all things. S.

8. Outgoings of morning and evening rejoice. *Outgoings, the places* where morning and evening have their birth, the east and west ; the meaning being that all created things break forth into songs of joy before God.

P.—As God scatters the light of the morning and draws the curtains of the evening, so He does both in favor to man and gives occasion to us to rejoice in both ; so that, how contrary soever light and darkness are to each other, and how inviolable soever the partition between them, both are equally welcome to the world in their season ; it is hard to say which is more welcome to us, the light of the morning which befriends the business of the day, or the shadows of the evening which befriend the repose of the night. H.

God has given a peculiar beauty and brightness to the lights of evening and morning. We never feel so deeply as at these times the beauty of the world which He has made our home. The softened lights, the longer shadows, heighten all the colors of nature, make all distances vaster, and all outlines less sharp and distinct, and so beget a sense of freedom in which we feel true pleasure. And it is the daily life and care of God in the world that makes the joy. He is the sun whose beams of blessing enlighten and warm our hearts. His great, infinite presence behind and below all created life comes up into it and mingles, unseen and often unrecognized, with the life of nature and the experience of our souls. To the child of God, faithful to his duties, believing in God's love, hoping for heaven, the outgoings of the morning and evening rejoice — of the morning because it opens with new tokens of his Father's love ; of the evening, if for no other reason, because "a day's march nearer home" is done. *W. R. Brooks.*

There is, indeed, a softening, gentle, meditative mood to which the sights and sounds of nature win the thoughtful mind ; and how grateful, how healing, how redeeming, from fretfulness and care, how preparatory for better things, are the sweet natural influences of a morning or evening landscape even on our mortal frame ! It is a power prelude to the great harmony, and awakening attention ; many analogies will be suggested, many thoughts excited, many fancies and feelings stirred. But the grand meaning, the utterance of Deity, the inward sense of His eternal power and Godhead, the perception of the Omnipresent, yet personal Intelligence, the sight and sense of all that God unquestionably means His creatures to behold in nature ! the soul must be awake, indeed, for that, alive to God for that, and then how blessed ! For when this grandeur of sensibility to Him, and this power of communion with Him, is carried, as the habit of the soul, into the forms of nature, then the walls of our world

are as the gates of heaven. Earth is no more a prison, but a province of freedom, loveliness, and light, as one of the mansions of our Father's house, where we may walk with God, and prepare to be translated. How near we are to Him, in every part of His creation, when alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord ! G. B. C.

The happiness of life is the happiness of its separate days. We too often pray and care for our whole life, earnestly intending and desiring that as a whole it may be good and true, but overlook each single day, as if one life had to be lived at once and not by days. It should be our study and care to make each day, *this* day, a perfect day. A day is a life, and the record of this day and every other is preserved in the book of God. And life is a day ; of it the evening cometh and also the morning. If the evening of life is to rejoice, the day must be spent in the faithful service of God. Then after the evening the morning of the next life shall open with a brightness and beauty such as never shone on earth, and with song such as this world never heard. *W. R. Brooks.*

9. With this verse begins the special subject of thanksgiving, the thanksgiving for the harvest. P.—God is represented in this and the following verses as actively engaged in tilling the soil for the sustenance of His great family. In this the supply of water is the first consideration, and the clouds are mentioned here by a term familiar in Oriental cultivation. The whole conception of a most successful process of agriculture on a vast scale, carried on methodically by the wisdom and power of God, is very grand. *De Witt.*

Spring follows winter, and ushers in summer, according to an appointed order. This fact teaches the continuous control and government of God. God seems to come with the coming in of each of the seasons. As Maker, and Life-giver, and Father, "Thou visitest the earth and waterest it." *S. Martin.*—The Holy Spirit makes use of a homely word when, in describing the fertilizing, genial rain, He terms it a visiting of the earth. When a visit is made by rich and affectionate friends, they do not come empty, but bring with them a blessing or good gift to testify their favor and love. Thus, although God is over all, and fills heaven and earth, He does not at all times leave traces or marks of His presence. But when in time of drought He gives a gracious, fertilizing shower, it is as if He paid us a visit, and brought along with Him a great blessing, that we might mark His love and goodness. *Arndt.*

He who created us had to contrive for our support, and to contrive variety of foods and flavors ; and so He bade the earth bring forth the vast varieties of its products in vegetable and animal life. Man's life could have been maintained with corn alone, had the earth produced nothing else ; but certainly man's life would have been a very different and a very dreary thing had it been so. He who created us had also to provide for the support of our thinking, our intellectual and spiritual life, and to contrive to give us variety of thought, variety of moods and feelings. One thought eternally repeated might keep a man's mind alive. One mood, one feeling, prolonged, might keep the soul from annihilation. But surely life thus prolonged through years and centuries would be a dreary life. One of the Divine contrivances to give us variety of thought, a continual succession of new thoughts and frequent changes, of our moods of feeling, is in the influence God has given to the outer world upon our minds and hearts. God created this great nature around us, filled it with His own presence and power and wisdom, set it in perpetual motion and busy change, that our spirits might be set thinking and studying by it, that our feelings might be awakened, our sentiments touched, and our souls instructed by the influence of the world upon us. *W. R. Brooks.*

River of God. Fountain of God is here His inexhaustible storehouse of blessing, and more especially the fulness of the heavenly waters, out of which He sends down the fructifying rain. D.—*The brook of God*, not as the Chaldean and others “the clouds,” but rather “the rain.” It is the heavenly stream as opposed to earthly streams ; called a *brook* or *channel* with reference to the irrigation of the land by means of such. It is full of water, whereas the wells which men dig, the channels which they cut, dry up and cease to flow. P.

Thou providest corn. The corn-plants are utterly unknown throughout all the geological periods. Not the slightest trace or vestige of them occurs in any of the strata of the earth until we come to the most recent formations, contemporaneous with man. The testimony of geology, therefore, confirms unequivocally the testimony of Revelation, and shows that corn was not only specially created for man's use, but also got ready specially for the appointed hour of his appearance on earth. *Macmillan.*

God, by providing rain for the earth, prepares corn for man. *As for the earth, out of it comes bread* (Job 28 : 5), for out of it comes corn ; but every grain of corn that comes out of it God

Himself prepared ; and therefore He provides rain for the earth that thereby He may prepare corn for man, under whose feet He has put the rest of the creatures, and for whose use He has fitted them. When we consider that the yearly produce of the corn is not only an operation of the same power that raises the dead, but an instance of that power not much unlike it, and that the constant benefit we have from it is an instance of that goodness which endures forever, we have reason to think that it is no less than a God that prepares corn for us. Corn and cattle are the two staple commodities with which the husbandman, who deals immediately in the fruits of the earth, is enriched ; and both are owing to the Divine goodness in watering the earth. To this it is owing that the pastures are clothed with flocks (v. 13). H.—Blessed be the Great Householder ; He does not suffer the harvest to fail, He supplies the teeming myriads of earth with bread enough from year to year. Even thus does He vouchsafe heavenly food to His redeemed ones : “He hath given meat unto them that fear Him ; He is ever mindful of His covenant.” S.

9-11. Our harvest-homes are times of rejoicing too. Would that our tillers and reapers of the soil were wont to refer all to God as the Psalmist did. “*Thou waterest the earth, Thou greatly enrichest it, Thou preparest the corn, Thou waterest the ridges, Thou settlest the furrows, Thou makest it soft with showers, Thou blessest the springing thereof, Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness.*” Not one word of man, of man's skill or of man's labor, not one thought of self. *Bouchier.*—The farmer does nothing more to it than break up the ground, and plough, and sow, and then lets it lie. But God must be always attending to it with rain and heat, and must do everything to make it grow and prosper, while the farmer lies at home and sleeps. *Luther.*

11. Thou crownest the year. A full and *plentiful harvest* is the *crown* of the year ; and this springs from the unmerited *goodness* of God. This is the *diadem* of the earth. “*Thou encirclest,*” as with a diadem. A most elegant expression to show the progress of the sun through the *twelve* signs of the zodiac, producing the seasons, and giving a sufficiency of light and heat alternately, to all places on the surface of the globe, by its north and south declination (amounting to 23° 28' at the solstices) on each side of the equator. A more beautiful image could not have been chosen ; and the very appearance of the *space*, termed the *zodiac* on a celestial globe, shows with what propriety

the idea of a *circle* or *diadem* was conceived by this inimitable poet. *A. Clarke.* — **Thy paths drop fatness.** The obvious meaning of this strong but beautiful figure is, that wherever He appears His movements are attended by a rich and fertilizing influence. *Fatness* is as usual a figure for rich food, and that for general abundance. *A.*

12. The pastures of the wilderness.

The wilderness does not mean a bare desert, as the word “pastures” shows; it is merely contrasted with the cultivated arable land. *P.* — It was in part the land that was fit for pasture but not for cultivation. Such was the greater part of the Sinaitic peninsula, and of the country between the Jordan and the Phrat. *M.*

12, 13. At the overflowing goodness of God nothing was mute. The dumb flocks broke forth in grateful melody, and even the green herbage on which they revelled itself had a tongue in praise of Him whose pencil gave it its color, and whose breath imparted to it its perfume. It was not enough for God to furnish the fruits necessary for the support of man. He adorned the earth with flowers of every form and hue and fragrance. It is full of His gratuitous love, of superadded grace. The lines of beauty and of utility intermingle and run into each other. *B. B. E.*

God reveals Himself as omnipotent at the return of every spring, and uses His might for the bestowal of blessings. The goodness of God crowns the year as a diadem does the brow. Men find out His goings by the blessings of His paths. The jocund flocks clothe the pastures; the very hills are girded with joy and gladness. Shall these rejoicings of nature find no echo in the human heart? Let men vie with nature in thanksgivings; let their rejoicings swell into praise and happy harvest-songs. *Tholuck.*

High above the poetic beauty of this exquisite Psalm is the moral beauty of the sentiment which sees God Himself and not Nature only, nor her so-called “laws,” in the rains, the green pastures, and the valleys covered over with corn. It is *God* who visits the earth; it is the river of God which bears along the copious waters: “*Thou* makest it soft with showers;” *Thou* blessest the springing up of its vegetable growths; it is *Thy* paths—Thine own very footsteps over our fields—that distil fatness and abundance; it is unto *Thee* most appropriately that pastures and valleys shout the chorus of praise and sing for joy! Everything is full of

God; His hand and His footsteps everywhere. There is no chill of a heartless and godless philosophy, falsely so-called, on the heart of this inspired poet; his glowing soul is warmed by the felt presence of an active, energizing God whose handiwork and whose blessed footsteps he sees in everything that grows and in every agency that makes growth and beauty and fruitfulness on the face of this fair world.

By a very interesting but logical process Isaac Taylor infers from this Psalm the general culture, the tastes, and the piety of the Hebrew people of David's time. The data given are the Psalm itself; the fact that it was sung in the public worship of the sanctuary before and by the assembled thousands of Israel—sung manifestly with spirit and enthusiasm; with intelligence therefore, and with some adequate conception of its sentiments. Now, could a people in whose national literature such a Psalm has a prominent place—nay more, in whose liturgy, in whose stated worship it has its cherished place; on whose annual thanksgiving festival, the great feast of the tabernacles, we may suppose it formed the centre and culminating point of their enthusiasm—could a people so trained, capable of being charmed by the poetry of such a song and of being lifted heavenward and Godward by its Divine sympathies and its recognition of an ever-present God, be only a “horde of rude and ignorant barbarians?” *C.*

Worship of God will never be healthy and many-sided if it excludes the view of the outer world. Look at the Book of Psalms. Deep, manifold, and awful is the tragedy of human life there, and glorious are the bursts of melody and hope that sweep across it; but through all struggle, and agony, and shouts of triumph, there come the scent of flowers, and of pines, and of mown grass, the singing of birds, the lowing of cattle, the roar of the sea, and the murmur of the stream. So in the house of God and in worship heaven and earth are brought together. *J. Leckie.*

In the season of freshness and growth, and of exuberant life, we are impressed by the profusion and affluence of those provisions which the God of Nature has made for the well-being of His creatures. *Bread enough and to spare* is inscribed all over our Father's house. What an infinity of blossoms, above all that are needed! what an infinity of fruits, above all that

ever will be used ! *Light* is not meted out like an artificial illumination, so much consumption for so many who use it ; it is poured all over the earth with illimitable profusion—over the rocks and woods, where no man liveth ; all over the sea, where no man roameth. Who can measure the waters ? There is no fear that man ever will exhaust their abundance. The springs are full and flowing among the rocks ; the brooks running through the meadows ; the large rivers rolling their magnificence to the sea ; the great lakes lifting up their reservoirs of abundance ; and the dew and the rain defying and baffling all powers of computation. The concave of the skies, how vast !—large enough for a canopy over all the earth. And the air which is treasured within it, for the sustenance of life, is not barely sufficient for so many, and for so long ; it seems to laugh at the idea of stint or measurement. With wings laden with perfume, it flies away to kiss the hills, fan the tree-tops, and play with the ocean—encircling the globe, and coming back, as if it could not possibly exhaust its exuberant strength and life. The works of God are distinguished by this abundance, this immense profusion, this infinity. *William Adams.*

For nearly three thousand years, since the royal poet looked over the plains of Judea covered with the bounty of God, and broke forth into his magnificent hymn of praise, has the

earth rolled on in her course, and the hand of God has blessed her, and all her children, with seed-time and harvest, with joy and abundance. The very steadfastness of the Almighty's liberality, flowing like a mighty ocean through the infinite vast of the universe, makes His creatures forget to wonder at its wonderfulness, to feel true thankfulness at its immeasurable goodness. The sun rises and sets so surely ; the seasons run on amid all their changes with such inimitable truth, that we take as a matter of course that which is amazing beyond all stretch of imagination, and good beyond the widest expansion of the noblest human heart. God feeds His family of countless myriads swarming over the surface of all countless worlds, and none know need but through the follies of themselves, or the cruelty of their fellows. God pours His light from innumerable suns on innumerable rejoicing planets ; He waters them everywhere in the fittest moment ; He ripens the food of globes and of nations, and gives them fair weather to garner it. And from age to age, amid His endless creatures of endless forms and powers, in the beauty and the sunshine, and the magnificence of nature, He seems to sing throughout creation the glorious song of His own Divine joy, in the immortality of His youth, in the omnipotence of His nature, in the eternity of His patience, and the abounding boundlessness of His love. *W. Howitt.*

cause a prescribed part of our duty in religion. On the contrary, as we are constituted, there is nothing to be thought of, or desired, or done at all comparable to the exercise of worship itself. In it we rise highest, think the noblest things, burn with the divinest fires our nature can support. We discover what joy we are made for, in having our finite mind exalted by the contemplations, and kindled by the glow of worship. And it is a joy of the finite and created only. The Infinite Being has of course no right or possibility of worship; for there is nothing above Him to move His homage or set Him in the beatitude of praise. The glorious Amen, the awful joy of worship, is permitted creature minds alone. *Bushnell.*

3. *Lie to Thee*, make false professions of allegiance, yield a feigned obedience, through the influence of fear. A.—“Yield feigned obedience,” is doubtless the true rendering. There is, perhaps, a tacit comparison implied. If even His enemies must render a forced and tardy and hypocritical submission, what should they do to whom He has manifested Himself in love? P.

4. God finds satisfaction and delight in human worship. Apart from this conviction, our praises and our adoration must lose their life and reality. If I speak, it is because I believe He listens. If I rejoice in looking up into His face, it is because I see Him looking back upon me with ineffable love and delight. In the act of worship we draw near to God, and God draws near to us. How it is, we know not, but through secret avenues He enters our spirits, and we become mysteriously one with Him. To discharge this duty of worship aright, our religious thought should not incessantly revolve about our personal conflicts with sin and our own immortal safety. We think too much of ourselves, too little of God. We ask Him too constantly for help; we too seldom thank Him with throbbing gratitude for the blessings which are ours already, and for the infinite grace which prompted Him to give us Christ and to promise us heaven. More deep and devout thought on what God is would change all this, and bring our life in this world into nearer harmony with what we hope it will be in the next. *R. W. Dale.*

5. Come and see the works of God. Such glorious events as the cleaving of the Red Sea and the overthrow of Pharaoh, are standing wonders, and throughout all time a voice sounds forth concerning them—“Come and see.” Even till the close of all things, the marvellous works of God at the Red Sea will be the

subject of meditation and praise; for, standing on the sea of glass mingled with fire, the triumphal armies of heaven sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb. It has always been the favorite subject of the inspired bards. S.

6. *He turned the sea into the dry (land); through the river they shall pass on foot; there will we rejoice in Him.* There is an obvious allusion to the crossing of the Red Sea and the Jordan, not as mere historical events, but as types or samples of God’s extraordinary interpositions on behalf of Israel, such as might be realized again in their experience. Hence the promiscuous use of preterite and future forms, as if to say, the God of Israel will again turn the Red Sea into dry land for the passage of His people; if need be, they shall again cross the Jordan dry shod; there, on the scene of these miraculous events shall we again rejoice in Him. A.

The Psalmist refers to the passage through the Red Sea and the Jordan, not as to transactions which took place and were concluded at a given period of time, but as happening really in every age. God’s guidance of His people is a constant drying up of the sea and of the Jordan, and the joy over His mighty deeds is always receiving new materials. *Hengstenberg.*—Those miracles of the past recur in the present. That ancient story is not the record merely of a bygone age, but is daily new, daily repeats itself to those who have eyes open to see and hearts open to perceive. P.

7. Those deeds of the Red Sea and the Jordan were no transient outbursts of power, but indicate a rule and sway that are indeed eternal, abiding, evermore sustained, and never waning. His eyes *look into* the nations, piercing, scanning perfectly. Let rebels never lift up themselves against Him! C.

8. Again he calls upon all nations to bless God for His wonderful deliverance vouchsafed to His people. Then he describes their oppression. P.

10. For Thou, O God, hast proved us. He proved His Israel with sore trials. All the saints must go to the proving house; God had one Son without sin, but He never had a son without trial. Why ought we to complain if we are subjected to the rule which is common to all the family, and from which so much benefit has flowed to them? S.—*Thou, O God, hast proved us and tried us.* Then we are likely to get good by our afflictions when we look upon them under this notion, for then we may see God’s grace and love

at the bottom of them, and our own honor and benefit in the end of them. By afflictions we are proved as silver in the fire, that our graces by being exercised may be made more strong and active; and so we may be improved, as silver when it is refined by the fire and made more clear from its dross; for thus we are made partakers of God's holiness (Heb. 12 : 10). H.

If anything, so to speak, is providential, affliction is. If in anything whatever we are bound to trust God with all the completeness of our judgment, with all the strength of our understanding, with all the adoration of our heart, it is when He is taking us apart to make us perfect through suffering. Therefore it is that God sends sorrow to one man, and not to another; at one time in this way, at another time in that. The sorrow that might cure us to-day might not cure us to-morrow; the sorrow that might be good for me, might not be good for you. Each man has his own sorrows, different from any one else's in all the world, since he himself is different from any one else. Each individual believer is led his own way into the wilderness; each has Jesus with him there. *Bishop Thorold*.—The Spirit of Christ calms the soul of a suffering believer, not by taking away all sense of pain, but by overcoming it with a sense of His love. *Gurnall*.

11. God will not use His rod upon strangers, but upon His own children, because He loves them; and such afflictions, though distressing, are good visitants. And nothing is gained by striving with the Almighty, for He will either break the heart or break the neck of those that contend with Him—will bring them either to repentance or to ruin. H.

12. Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place. Thou hast proved, and Thou hast brought. Thou laidst the trouble, and Thou tookest it off; yea, and hast made us an ample recompense, for Thou hast brought us to a pleasant, lovely, fertile, rich place, a happy condition, a flourishing condition of things, so that Thou hast made us to forget all our trouble. *W. Nicholson*.—"A wealthy place." The Hebrew word occurs elsewhere only in Psalm 23 : 5; "My cup runneth over"—is abundance itself. It indicates prosperity and plenty, with allusion to abundant moisture—so essential in the climate of Palestine. C. —*Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place, into a well-watered place, for the word is, like the gardens of the Lord, and therefore fruitful. God brings His people into trouble that their comforts afterward may be the sweeter, and*

that their affliction may thus yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness, which will make the poorest place in the world a wealthy place. H.

13. We have now the *personal* acknowledgment of God's mercy; first, in the announcement on the part of the Psalmist of the offerings which he is about to bring, and which he had vowed in his trouble; and then, in the record of God's dealing with his soul, which had called forth his thankfulness. P.

Come with burnt-offerings. Let this be our burnt-offering, a sanctified body and a heart given up to the Lord. "Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." When the eyes abhor lustful objects, the ears slanders, the feet erring paths, the hands wrong and violence, the tongue flattery and blasphemy, the heart pride and hypocrisy; this is thy whole burnt-offering. *T. Adams*.

Pay Thee my vows. Vows incautiously made may prove a snare to the soul; and therefore it is that the Hebrew ritual—which, as a grand collection of symbols, descended into the details of religious life—undertook carefully to regulate this matter of vows. All statutes concerning them were designed to be restrictive and cautionary; showing even under that imperfect dispensation how careful we must be as to our vows in the presence of Almighty God. On the other hand, there are vows which are right vows, and which ought to be made—vows that engage us to do things that were originally binding upon us; vows made under a sense of the Divine presence and the Divine authority. And so the Psalmist, under inspiration of the Holy Ghost, again and again declares his purpose to pay unto the Lord the vows which he has made. *B. M. Palmer*.

15. Of all we have we should give the Lord His portion, and that should be the choicest we can select. It was no waste to burn the fat upon Jehovah's altar, nor to pour the precious ointment upon Jesus' head; neither are large gifts and bountiful offerings to the Church of God any diminution to a man's estate. S.

16. I will declare what He hath done. The beginning of all friendship between Christ and men lies with Him. I suppose that every man who has felt Christ's love will say, whatever his theological standpoint, "I was apprehended of Christ." It is because He lays His seeking hand upon us that we come to Him, and His choice of us precedes ours of Him. This is how men come to be His friends, because, when they were enemies, He gave Himself for them, and has ever since been send-

ing the rays of His love to draw us to Himself. The personal relation and obligation of each soul to Christ, when fully admitted, has great power to give individuality and strength of character to piety. Instead of making us exclusive or solitary in our religious feelings, it is sure to expand our love for all men when one feels how Christ has loved him and died for him, and then that every other human being is as truly the object of the Saviour's sufferings and death as he. Toward every one for whom Christ has done all which he has done for him, a Christian feels, at times, great love and desire, and has no rest till every one knows and feels the love which Christ has for him. *N. Adams.*

Loyalty to Christ leads us to witness for Him. If we are true to our Lord we shall feel that we cannot but speak up and out for Him, and that all the more where His name is unloved and un-honored. He is a doubtfully loyal subject who, if he lives among rebels, is afraid to show his colors. He is already a coward, and is on his way to be a traitor. *A. M.*

As long as we were without Christ and Christ's peace, we did not know the value of them, and so could not be expected heartily to recommend them to others—just as the blind man cannot be expected to speak of the beauty of colors, or the deaf man of the loveliness of music. But when we have “tasted that the Lord is good;” when Christ has “become precious to us, as He is to all them that believe,” then we can enlarge upon our own experience—“Out of the fulness of the heart the mouth will speak.” *M' Cosh.*

All have not the gifts which would fit for public speech, but all who have tasted that the Lord is gracious can tell somehow how gracious He is. The first Christian sermon was very short, and it was very efficacious, for it “brought to Jesus” the whole congregation. Here it is: “He first findeth his brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias.” Surely we can all say that, if we have found Him. Surely we shall all long to say it, if we are glad that we have found Him, and if we love our Brother. We have to carry a message—no refinement of words is needed for that—arguments are not needed. We have to tell it simply, faithfully, and confidently, as having proved it true. We have to tell it beseechingly, as loving the souls to whom they bring it. Surely we can all do that if we ourselves are living on Christ and have drunk into His Spirit. *A. M.*

17. I cried unto Him, He was extolled. That God has given us leave to pray,

a command to pray, encouragements to pray, and (to crown all) a heart to pray, is what we have reason to mention with thankfulness to His praise; and the more, if, when we cried to Him with our mouth, He was extolled with our tongue, if we were enabled by faith and hope to give glory to Him then, when we were seeking for mercy and grace from Him, and to praise Him for mercy in prospect, though it be not yet in possession. By crying to Him we do indeed extol Him. He is pleased to reckon Himself honored by the humble, believing prayers of the upright, and this is a great thing which he has done for our souls, that He has been pleased so far to unite interests with us, that in seeking our own welfare we seek His glory. *His exaltation was under my tongue*, so it may be read; I was considering in my mind how I might exalt and magnify His name. When prayers are in our mouths praises must be in our hearts. *H.*

18. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. The very supposition that “if he regarded iniquity in his heart, the Lord would not hear him,” implies the possibility that such may be the state even of believers; and there is abundant reason to fear that it is in this way their prayers are so often hindered, and their supplications so frequently remain unanswered. *R. Gordon.*

When our end and aim in prayer is *not right*, our prayers are *not successful*. We miss the blessing when we ask amiss. God never undertook to satisfy mere selfish, worldly, covetous, or fleshly desires. He will own no other voice in prayer but that of His own Spirit: “He that searcheth the heart knoweth the mind of the Spirit.” A spiritual breathing—a spiritual sigh is heard. Holy desires have a sure answer. *Manton.*

Possibly our hearts are shockingly deceitful in such iniquity. Are we strangers to an experience like this—that when we mourn over our cold prayers as a misfortune, we evade a search of that disputed territory for the cause of them, through fear that we shall find it there, and we struggle to satisfy ourselves with an increase of spiritual duties which shall cost us no sacrifice? Are we never sensible of resisting the *hints* which the Holy Spirit gives us in parables, by refusing to *look that way* for the secret of our deadness—saying, “Not that! Oh no, not that! But let us *pray* more”? Many a doubtful principle in a Christian mind, if once set in the focus of a conscience illumined by the Holy Spirit, would resolve itself into a sin, for which that Christian would turn and

look up guiltily to the Master, and then go out and weep bitterly. *A. Phelps.*

None trifle with God and make a sport of sin so much as those whose way of living interferes with their prayers ; who pray for such or such a virtue, and then put themselves under circumstances which render the practice of it next to impossible. But the spirit of prayer is a spirit of prudence, a spirit of caution and conduct, and never pursues the thing it prays for in a way contrary to the nature of the thing itself. *South.*—The mournful thought is suggested, How many there are who seem to be doing what they can to make it useless for them to pray ! A man who tells lies over the counter cannot pray. A man who bribes or who accepts a bribe cannot pray. A man who forgives not, asks uselessly for forgiveness. The possibility that any secret sin may be shutting off any answer to our prayers should make us cry fervently, “Search me, O God, and know my heart ; try me, and know my thoughts ; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” It is not where there is a distressing consciousness of falling in execution below our desires and yearnings that prayer is blocked out. Far from this. But the desire to cherish sin, or the refusal to do *the whole* will of God, makes prayer itself useless and sinful, because the heart does not submit entirely to God. *C. C.*

The very fact of our weakness and insufficiency is of itself an argument and a cord that draws Him to our help. An honest cry of any heart to Jesus will bring Him instantly without thought on His part either on our merit or demerit. He only asks this much, that it be from the heart ; iniquity covered up, one face for Him and one for the devil, does not bring Him. “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” But the faintest effort of the heart enslaved in sin, to free itself from its chains, is sure of the strong arm which the prophet said should “break every chain, and set the captive free.” *Anon.*

Verses 18, 19, 20. I find David making a syllogism, in mood and figure, two propositions he perfected. “*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me ; but verily God hath heard me ; He hath attended to the voice of my prayer.*” Now I expected that David should have concluded thus : “Therefore I regard not wickedness in my heart ;” but far otherwise he concludes : “*Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me.*” I looked that he should have put the crown on his own, and he puts it on God’s

head. I will learn this excellent logic, that whatsoever the premises be, I make God’s glory the conclusion. He who reasons according to David’s logic, will be bent on influencing men to give God the glory in all things. *T. Fuller.*—God’s glory must always be the conclusion. *God has heard me, and therefore blessed be God.* What we win by prayer we must wear with praise. Mercies in answer to prayer do, in a special manner, oblige us to be thankful. He has *not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy.* Lest it should be thought that the deliverance was granted for the sake of some worthiness in his prayer, he ascribes it to God’s mercy. *H.*

20. Blessed be God. It is God’s due that we remember all His kindness. No view of His providence is complete or correct without it, no estimate of His character, no measure of our deep indebtedness and heightened obligation. It were a great violence to the thankful spirit to deny it the privilege of returning often along the track of its mercies, to weep tears of penitence over its own poor returns, and to tune to sweeter music its notes of praise. Let them still shine upon us from the full round of the year—all its sunny hours, its bright pages of *rescues, healings, preventions, interpositions,* every endowment for soul and body ministered by that Fatherly hand ! All these we may, we must, we shall remember ! *A. L. Stone.*—If we wish the perpetual feast of a contented spirit, and the perpetual ornament of a praising one, combat natural fault-finding, and no less natural foreboding. Rejoice in the present, and trust for the future. And in the fulfilment of any wish and the disappointment of any fear—in the kindness of any friend, and in the answer to any prayer—in every gracious providence, and in every spiritual mercy bestowed on ourselves or others dear—in all these let us recognize the merciful kindness of the Lord, and let us acknowledge what we recognize. *Hamilton.*

As far back as I can remember, I had the habit of thanking God for everything I received, and of asking Him for everything I wanted. If I lost a book or any one of my playthings, I prayed that I might find it. I prayed walking along the streets, in school or out of school, whether playing or studying. I did not do this in obedience to any prescribed rule—it seemed natural. I thought of God as an everywhere-present being, full of kindness and love, who would not be offended if children talked to Him. *Charles Hodge.*

Which hath not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me. He has neither withdrawn His love nor my liberty

to pray. He has neither cast out my prayer nor me. His mercy and my cries still meet each other. S.—So long as we are here let us ask this of God, that He will not “remove from us our prayer, and His own mercy”—that is, that we may perseveringly pray, and He may perseveringly pity. For many grow languid in praying; and in the freshness of their conversion they pray fervently, afterward languidly, afterward coldly, afterward negligently; they become careless. The enemy is awake; you are sleeping. Our Lord Himself, in the Gospel, gave us the precept, “that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;” and He gives us an illustration from the unjust judge. Therefore let us not faint in prayer. Although He delays that which He is going to grant, He does not take it from us; since we may be confident of His promise, let us not faint in praying; and even this not fainting comes of His own bounty. Therefore when you see that your prayer is not removed from you be of good heart, for His mercy is not removed from you. *Augustine.*

I have known devout persons to stand year after year, in utter wonder that their prayers, so reasonable in appearance, brought no visible return; yet the faith that came at last out of that trial finally justified such patience by its splendor. For even while we wait, through all the breathings of our aspiration, from the first hesitating, stammering whisper of entreaty, on to the last strong syllable of praise when faith triumphs over the failing flesh—prayer is ever, moment by moment, its own sufficing recompense. Its words react on the soul like a benediction. Its every struggle is a consolation, and every sigh is peace. It puts the world under your feet. It makes all things yours, while ye are Christ’s and Christ is God’s. The spirit comes back from its seasons of converse with God into the strife of the world, its interior face radiant with a veil of glory like that Moses wore when he came down from the mount. And this mutual interacting of prayer and fulfilment ever stimulates the soul and rewards the understanding, while a far profounder and holier satisfaction descends into, illumines, and inspires the heart. F. D. H.

Prayer is the expression of a faith, obscure or clear, wavering or steadfast, in the existence, the presence, the power, and the sympathy of the Being to whom prayer is addressed. Without a certain measure of faith and trust in God prayer would not burst forth, or would sud-

denly be dried up in the soul. If faith everywhere resists and outlives all the denials, all the doubts and darkness which oppress mankind, it is that man bears within himself an imperishable consciousness of the enduring bond which connects him with God and God with him. And he who believes in God cannot but have recourse to Him and pray to Him. *Guizot.*

God has so arranged His providence that He provides an answer to prayer. He sends an answer to prayer in precisely the same way as He compasses all His other moral designs, in the same manner as He conveys His blessings and inflicts His judgments. He does not require to interfere with His own arrangements in order to answer prayer, for there is an answer provided in the arrangement which He has made from all eternity. How is it that God sends us the bounties of His providence and supplies the many wants of His creatures? that He encourages industry, arrests the plots of wickedness, and punishes in this life notorious offenders against His law? The answer is, by the skilful pre-arrangements of His providence, whereby the needful events fall out at the very time and in the very way required. When the question is asked, How does God answer prayer? we give the very same reply—it is by the pre-ordained appointment of God, when He settled the constitution of the world, and set all its parts in order. There appears to us to be a beautiful congruity in this method of answering prayer. Prayer is effectually answered, and yet there is no room for, or encouragement to any possible evils, such as pride, self-confidence, and indolent self-complacency and inactivity. If prayer and its answers were connected as cause and effect, there might be a risk that when the person had prayed he would rashly conclude that exertion could not be necessary. But in the system now developed, while there is assuredly a connection between prayer and its answers, it is not a connection in the mechanical laws of nature, but in the counsels of God; and the man who has prayed, as he looks for the answer, feels that he must fall in with the Divine procedure. There is a wholesome discipline exercised by the very uncertainty (humanly speaking) of the means which God employs for sending the answer, and the man who has prayed is kept humble and dependent, and in the exercise of a spirit of waiting and watchfulness. He feels that he dare be proud and presumptuous only at the risk of defeating all the purposes served by his acts of devotion. He sees that on ceasing to be active God may probably punish him for his folly by laying an

arrest on the expected answer to his petitions.
M' Cosh.

Prayer rests on the fact of our dependence on God, on the belief of our intimate connection with the invisible world, and on the deep longing for spiritual communion which springs from the conviction that God is to us the most real and the most near of all beings. Prayer is not an instrument for altering the purposes or moving the heart of God, or for procuring the suspension of the ordinary course of nature; but it is one of the natural modes in which piety utters itself—in which it wants, for its own sake, to utter itself. *Young.*

In prayer the mean is more valuable than the end. The spirit of prayer, and the frequent exercise of it, is a greater blessing than the attainment of any other object short of heaven itself. It is the key to the treasury of heaven, and the promise and pledge of every other attainment. There is but one higher exercise than that of prayer—the returning of thanks for the granting of our requests; but each have their fitting seasons—prayer is the service of time; praise the employment of eternity. *Douglas.*

Every prayer for specific blessings in a Christian soul is tacitly conditioned. Three conditions, always understood, are given at the beginning of the Lord's Prayer: "Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done." In effect these conditions are one. If any blessing be prayed for a Christian petitioner deliberately wills that his prayer be refused, if to grant it should in any way obscure God's glory or hinder the advance of His kingdom, and so contravene what must be His will. Every Christian tacitly adds to every prayer, "nevertheless not my will, but Thine be done."

H. P. L

When thou prayest for spiritual graces, let thy prayer be absolute; when for temporal blessings, add a clause of God's pleasure; in both, with faith and humility. So shalt thou

receive what thou desirest, or more or better; never prayer rightly made was made unheard, or heard, ungranted. *Quarles.*—No man ever yet asked to be, as the days pass by, more and more noble, and sweet, and pure, and heavenly-minded; no man ever yet prayed that the evil spirits of hatred, and pride, and passion, and worldliness might be cast out of his soul, without his petition being granted, and granted to the letter. *Farrar.*

As holiness fits to prayer, so prayer befriends holiness, increases it much. Nothing so refines and purifies the soul as frequent prayer. If the often conversing with wise men doth so teach and advance the soul in wisdom, what then will the converse of God? This makes the soul to despise the things of the world, and in a manner makes it Divine; winds up the soul from the earth, acquainting it with delights that are infinitely sweeter. *Leighton.*—It is well to learn the lesson that peace comes after grace, that for tranquillity of soul we must go to God, and that He gives it by giving us His love and its gifts, of which, and of which only, peace is the result. There must be first of all, peace *with* God, that there may be peace from God. Then, when we have been won from our alienation and enmity by the power of the cross, and have learned to know that God is our Lover, Friend, and Father, we shall possess the peace of those whose hearts have found their home, the peace of spirits no longer at war within—conscience and choice tearing them asunder in their strife, the peace of obedience which banishes the disturbance of self-will, the peace of security shaken by no fears, the peace of a sure future across the brightness of which no shadows of sorrow nor mists of uncertainty can fall, the peace of a heart in amity with all mankind. So living in peace, we shall lay ourselves down and die in peace, and enter into "that country, afar beyond the stars," where "grows the flower of peace." A. M.

PSALM LXVII.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN ; ON STRINGED INSTRUMENTS. A PSALM, A SONG.

- 1 GOD be merciful unto us, and bless us,
And cause his face to shine upon us ; [Selah]
 2 That thy way may be known upon earth,
 Thy saving health [*salvation*] among all na-
 tions.
 3 Let the peoples praise thee, O God ;
 Let all the peoples praise thee.
 4 O let the nations be glad and sing for joy :
 For thou shalt judge the peoples with equity,

- And govern [*lead*] the nations upon earth. [Selah]
 5 Let the peoples praise thee, O God ;
 Let all the peoples praise thee.
 6 The earth hath yielded her increase :
 God, even our own God, shall bless us.
 7 God shall bless us ;
 And all the ends of the earth shall fear
 him.

THIS Psalm, like the sixty-fifth, seems to have special reference to the manifestation of God's goodness in the gift of fruitful seasons and abundant harvests. But from this the Psalmist, or the Church, of which he is the spokesman, takes occasion to anticipate the extension of God's covenanted gifts, both temporal and spiritual, to all the nations of the earth. This expectation is indeed the burden of the Psalm. A.

This Psalm is the joyful outpouring of a heart that longs to see the God and King of Israel acknowledged and worshipped as the God and King of the world. The Psalm, which may have been written at the time of the gathering in of the harvest (see v. 6), opens with words borrowed from the blessing of the high-priest in Num. 6 : 24-26. P.

The great thought is longing for the conversion of the world, as a result of peculiar manifestations of Divine goodness to Israel ; when God's face shines fully upon His people all nations will be attracted and won, and the reign of righteousness will be established. This is, therefore, in the most spiritual sense a Messianic Psalm ; not indeed, strictly speaking, predictive, but expressing hopes and anticipations completely fulfilled by the manifestation of God in Christ. *Cook.*

How admirably balanced are the parts of this missionary song ! The people of God long to see all the nations participating in their privileges, " visited with God's salvation, and gladdened with the gladness of His nation." They long for the general diffusion of the knowledge of God's way, the spreading abroad of the truth regarding the way of salvation. With a view to that, they cry for a time of quickening from

the presence of the Lord, and take encouragement in this prayer from the terms of the divinely-appointed benediction. As if they had said, " Remember that sure Word of Thine. God be gracious unto us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us. Let us be thus blessed, and we shall in our turn become a blessing. All the families of the earth shall through us become acquainted with Thy salvation." Such is the Church's expectation. And who shall say it is unreasonable ? If the little company of a hundred and twenty disciples who met in the upper chamber at Jerusalem, all of them persons of humble station and unobtrusive talents, were endued with such power by the baptism of the Holy Ghost, that within three hundred years the paganism of the empire was overthrown, one need not fear to affirm that, in order to the evangelization of the world, nothing more is required than that the churches of Christendom be baptized with a fresh effusion of the same Spirit of power. *William Binnie.*

I. God be merciful unto us, and bless us. God forgives, then He gives ; till He be merciful to pardon our sins through Christ, He cannot bless or look kindly on us sinners. All our enjoyments are but blessings in bullion, till Gospel grace and pardoning mercy stamp and make them current. *Gurnall.*

Our happiness comes from God's mercy and takes rise in that : and therefore the first thing prayed for is, *God be merciful to us*, to us sinners and pardon our sins, to us miserable sinners and help us out of our miseries. *God bless us* is a comprehensive prayer ; it is pity such excellent words should ever be used slightly

and carelessly and as a by-word. *God cause His face to shine upon us*, God by His grace qualify us for His favor, and then give us the tokens of His favor. We need desire no more to make us happy than to have God's face shine upon us, to have God love us, and let us know that He loves us. *To shine with us*; so the margin reads it; *with us* doing our endeavor, and let it crown that endeavor with success. If we by faith walk with God, we may hope that His face will shine with us. H.

2. The phrase, *saving health*, retained in the Authorized Version from an older one, has nothing corresponding to it in the Hebrew but the single word which always means *salvation*. A.—It can mean nothing more or other than that here. What the translators of our version meant beyond or different from this does not appear. The prayer is that all the nations may become acquainted with the salvation which God has provided for them. As noticed repeatedly, the religion of Israel was no narrow, exclusive thing. Though the centre of its worship was Jerusalem, its circumference embraced all the nations of the earth. C.

Thy way—that is, Thy will, Thy Word, Thy works. God's will must be known on earth, that it may be done on earth as it is in heaven. Except we know our Master's will, how shall we do it? God's will is revealed in His Word, and His Word is His way wherein we must walk, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left. *Boys*.

Two things he desires might be known among all nations, and not to the nation of the Jews only. God's way, the rule of duty. "Let them all know, as well as we do, *what is good*, and *what the Lord our God requires of them*; let them be blessed and honored with the same righteous statutes and judgments which are so much the praise of our nation and the envy of all its neighbors." His saving health, or His salvation; the former is wrapped up in His law, this in His Gospel. If God makes known His way to us and we walk in it, He will show us His saving health. They that have themselves experimentally known the pleasantness of God's ways and the comforts of His salvation, cannot but desire and pray that they may be known to others, even among all nations. All upon earth are bound to walk in God's way, all need His salvation, and there is in it enough for all; and therefore we should pray that both the one and the other may be made known to all. H.—The blessing of the Most High comes upon the world through the Church. We are blessed for the sake of others as well as our-

selves. God deals in a way of mercy with His saints, and then they make that way known far and wide, and the Lord's name is made famous in the earth. S.

3. Let the peoples praise Thee. Mark the sweet order of the blessed Spirit: First, mercy; then, knowledge; last of all, praising of God. We cannot see His countenance except He be merciful to us; and we cannot praise Him except His way be known upon earth. His mercy breeds knowledge; His knowledge, praise. *John Boys*.

Time begins and time ends with praise; and though during its course there may seem to be many an interval of dreary silence, yet God never wants praise. He inhabiteth the praises of eternity, and even here on earth praise waiteth for Him among His people. The whole of the course of God's saints is full of praise. And is there not ample reason? What though sin seem to have marred the Creator's glorious work? Is it not a glorious work still? The heavens, with all their wonders of brightness, glorify Him; the earth, with her ten thousand processes of life and organization is full of His power, and wisdom, and love; and man is the noblest proof of all these combined. If God's ordinary and creation mercies should warm our hearts and find utterance of praise from our lips, how should those hearts glow with fire, and those lips burst forth in songs of joy, when we remember that all our choicest blessings are not His ordinary creation gifts, but special bestowals of undeserved mercy and inconceivable love.

"Let all the peoples praise Thee." What though to some be denied the gift of praising Him with the lips? There is a more abiding and a worthier praise than this. A thousand secret strains of melody are uttered in His ear by the consistency and devotion of holy lives, more grateful than all the offerings of the voice; and these praises all can sing. "Let all the peoples praise Thee," not only in the church, nor on the Lord's Day only, but through all the vicissitudes of daily life. Some in their families; others in the mean and humble dwellings of the poor; others, again, in the busy haunts of commerce and amid the crowding and crushing of the selfish world—these all may praise Him, these and many more. Remember His own solemn words, think of them in the light of Christ's redemption, and ponder them at the foot of His Cross, "Whoso offereth praise, he honoreth Me; and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God." *Alford*.

4. Govern. Lead. The verb is the same as in 23 : 3, God being the great Shepherd of all nations. The object of the verb is repeated by the pronoun ; literally, “ the nations upon earth Thou ledest them.” P.—Well may they all rejoice and sing with exceeding joy because this great and righteous God rules so perfectly, evermore judging righteously. The word for “ govern ” is primarily *lead*, *i.e.*, to take charge of them as a shepherd of his flock, to guide their steps, shape their welfare, control their destinies. C.

5. *The nations shall acknowledge Thee, O God, the nations shall acknowledge Thee—all of them.* This repetition shows the anticipation here expressed to be the principal though not the primary subject of the Psalm. The position of the universal terms, at the close of this verse and v. 3, is highly emphatic, and precludes, in the most explicit manner, all restriction. A.

Let all the peoples praise Thee. These words are no vain repetition, but are a chorus worthy to be sung again and again. The great theme of the Psalm is the participation of the Gentiles in the worship of Jehovah ; the Psalmist is full of it ; he hardly knows how to contain or express his joy. S.—Not the mailed hand of earthly power, nor the crowned head of worldly glory, nor the brain of human philosophy ; but the heart of those who sing praises to God at midnight holds the secret which can solve the great problem of human life and turn its sorrow into joy. So it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. The anthems of the Church triumphant are but the prolonged echoes of the songs of the Church militant. “ Let the peoples praise Thee, O God, let *all* the peoples praise Thee.” H. J. V.

Bring her increase. We have comforts increased, the more we praise God for what we have already received. The more we praise Him, the more our blessings come down ; and the more His blessings come down, the more we

praise Him again ; so that we do not so much bless God as bless ourselves. *Manton.*

6. Our own God. How unexpressible was the inward pleasure wherewith we may suppose those words to have been uttered. How delightful an appropriation ! as if it were intended to be said, the blessing itself were less significant, it could not have that savor with it if it were not from our own God. Not only allow but urge your spirits thus to look toward God, that you may both delight in Him as being in Himself the most excellent one, and also as *being yours* ; for you are not permitted only but obliged to eye, accept, and rejoice in Him as such. *Howe.*

7. As he regarded the knowledge of God as the only remedy of the world’s misery, so he appears to have taken it for granted that the prosperity of the Church would be marked by the diffusion of that knowledge, and that such diffusion would be attended with the most happy results. “ God shall bless us,” he adds, “ and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him ; ” the leaven of His grace shall work from His Church outward, till the entire mass of humanity be leavened ; His kingdom shall extend on every side till it embraces the world. *J. Harris.*

God shall bless us. The prayer of the first verse is the song of the last. We have the same phrase twice, and truly the Lord’s blessing is manifold ; He blesses and blesses and blesses again. How many are His beatitudes ! How choice His benedictions ! They are the peculiar heritage of His chosen. God shall bless us is our assured confidence ; He may smite us, or strip us, or even slay us, but He must bless us. “ *And all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.* ” The ends of the earth shall adore their God. Ignorance shall be removed, insolence subdued, injustice banished, idolatry abhorred, and the Lord’s love, light, life, and liberty shall be over all, the Lord Himself being King of kings and Lord of lords. *Amen, and Amen.* S.

PSALM LXVIII.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN. A PSALM OF DAVID, A SONG.

- 1 LET God arise, let his enemies be scattered ;
Let them also that hate him flee before him.
- 2 As smoke is driven away, so drive them
away :
As wax melteth before the fire,
So let the wicked perish at the presence of
God.
- 3 But let the righteous be glad ; let them ex-
ult before God :
Yea, let them rejoice with gladness.
- 4 Sing unto God, sing praises to his name :
Cast up a high way for him that rideth
through the deserts ;
His name is JAH ; and exult ye before him.
- 5 A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the
widows,
Is God in his holy habitation.
- 6 God setteth the solitary in families :
He bringeth out the prisoners into prosperity :
But the rebellious dwell in a parched land.
- 7 O God, when thou wentest forth before thy
people,
When thou didst march through the wilder-
ness ;
- 8 The earth trembled, [Selah
The heavens also dropped at the presence of
God :
Even yon Sinai trembled at the presence of
God, the God of Israel.
- 9 Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain,
Thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when
it was weary.
- 10 Thy congregation dwelt therein :
Thou, O God, didst prepare of thy goodness
for the poor.
- 11 The Lord giveth the word :
The women that publish the tidings are a
great host.
- 12 Kings of armies flee, they flee :
And she that tarrieth at home divideth the
spoil.
- 13 Will ye lie among the sheepfolds,
As the wings of a dove covered with silver,
And her pinions with yellow gold ?
- 14 When the Almighty scattered kings therein,
It was as when it snoweth in Zalmon.
- 15 A mountain of God is the mountain of Ba-
shan ;
- An high mountain is the mountain of Ba-
shan.
- 16 Why look ye askance, ye high mountains,
At the mountain which God hath desired for
his abode ?
Yea, the LORD will dwell *in it* for ever.
- 17 The chariots of God are twenty thousand,
even thousands upon thousands :
The Lord is among them, *as in* Sinai, in the
sanctuary.
- 18 Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led
thy captivity captive ;
Thou hast received gifts among men,
Yea, *among* the rebellious also, that the
LORD God might dwell *with them*.
- 19 Blessed be the Lord, who daily beareth our
burden,
Even the God who is our salvation. [Selah
- 20 God is unto us a God of deliverances ;
And unto JEHOVAH the Lord belong the is-
sues from death.
- 21 But God shall smite through the head of his
enemies,
The hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on
still in his guiltiness.
- 22 The Lord said, I will bring again from
Bashan,
I will bring *them* again from the depths of
the sea :
- 23 That thou mayest dip thy foot in blood,
That the tongue of thy dogs may have its
portion from *thine* enemies.
- 24 They have seen thy goings, O God,
Even the goings of my God, my King, into
the sanctuary.
- 25 The singers went before, the minstrels fol-
lowed after,
In the midst of the damsels playing with
timbrels.
- 26 Bless ye God in the congregations,
Even the Lord, *ye that are* of the fountain
of Israel.
- 27 There is little Benjamin their ruler,
The princes of Judah *and* their council,
The princes of Zebulun, the princes of
Naphtali.

- 28 Thy God hath commanded thy strength :
Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us.
- 29 Because of thy temple at Jerusalem
Kings shall bring presents unto thee.
- 30 Rebuke the wild beasts of the reeds,
The multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the peoples,
Trampling under foot the pieces of silver ;
He hath scattered the peoples that delight in war.
- 31 Princes shall come out of Egypt ;
Ethiopia shall haste to stretch out her hands unto God.
- 32 Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth :
O sing praises unto the Lord ; [Selah]
- 33 To him that rideth upon the heaven of heavens, which are of old ;
Lo, he uttereth his voice, *and that* a mighty voice.
- 34 Ascribe ye strength unto God :
His excellency is over Israel,
And his strength is in the skies.
- 35 O God, *thou art* terrible out of thy holy places :
The God of Israel, he giveth strength and power unto *his* people.
Blessed be God.

THE subject of this grand hymn is the entry of God into His sanctuary on Zion. This is described under figures borrowed from the triumph of an earthly conqueror, who, after having vanquished his enemies, and taken possession of their country, marches in solemn procession at the head of his troops to occupy the city which he has selected as his capital and the seat of empire. God is represented first as advancing at the head of the Israelites through the desert ; then as leading them victoriously into Canaan ; and finally as fixing His royal abode on Zion, whence He reigns in the majesty of universal dominion, acknowledged and feared by all the nations of the earth. Such is, briefly, an outline of the Psalm.

The methods of interpreting it, however, are various. The Fathers, and most of the older theologians, hold the Psalm to be Messianic. By many of them the Psalm is regarded as a direct prophecy of Christ and His kingdom, and devoid altogether of any reference to events occurring at the time it was written. Others more reasonably maintain a first reference to the historical circumstances of the time, and then apply the Psalm, either in whole or in part, typically to Christ. But even among those who contend that the Psalm is to be explained in the first instance by a reference to the circumstances under which it was composed, there is the greatest difference of opinion both as to the occasion for which, and the period at which, the Psalm was written. One set of critics sees in it every evidence of antiquity and originality ; another sees in it every mark of a late age, and a great absence of originality. All, however, combine in praising its vigor, its life, its splendor ; all recognize in it the work of a poet of no ordinary genius. P.

There is a wide difference of opinion among critics as to the time and occasion of the sixty-

eighth Psalm. But all agree that it is the grandest of these sacred odes. In its description of the wonderful achievements of Jehovah, as King and Protector of Israel, there is an intermingling of epic stateliness and grandeur with lyric simplicity and elegance. It is greatly enriched by frequent allusion to more ancient songs commemorative of signal deliverances. It is the most elaborate and artistic of the Psalms, but incomparably bold, rugged and abrupt in its style and transitions. The last mentioned features are decidedly in favor of assigning it to a very early date. In its extensive sweep it covers the whole history of Israel, from its birth as a nation under the sovereign rule of Jehovah, till His final triumph over all the kingdoms of the earth in the reign of the Messiah. "The fundamental thought is as clear as the arrangement and rhythmical organization—namely, the celebration of an entrance of God into His sanctuary after a victory, and His rule over the earth, extending itself from thence." (*Moll.*) The central historic fact with which the song of triumph is connected is probably the close of the wars recorded in 2 Sam. 10, 11 against the Ammonites, and the immense gathering of mercenary Syrian soldiers from beyond the Euphrates, whose aid they had purchased against the armies of David. (See v. 30 and 2 Sam. 10 : 6, 15–19.) The ark, representing the Divine Majesty (Psalm 78 : 61), had been carried before the host of Israel, and after a decisive victory is now borne back to Zion in a festal procession. *De Witt.*

This Psalm is usually considered the most glowing and powerful in the whole collection. It is remarkable for its boldness and energy, its wealth of historic allusion, its rapid movement, its brilliant imagery, its sustained elevation, its far-reaching outlook, its lofty devotion and triumphant faith. It is a triumphal song upon

the occasion of some brilliant victory. Its salient points are the entrance of God as conqueror into His sanctuary on Zion, and the extension of His dominion thence over all the earth. T. W. C.

It is a Psalm in the style of Deborah, stalking along upon the highest summit of hymnic feeling and delineation; Binnie characterizes it beautifully as "a magnificent triumphal anthem sparkling with gems from the earlier Scriptures"—all that is most glorious in the literature of the days of old is concentrated in it: the signal words of Moses, his blessing, the prophecies of Balaam, the Book of Deuteronomy, Hannah's song, re-echo here; but in addition to this the language is so bold and so peculiar, that we meet with no fewer than thirteen words that do not occur anywhere else. D.

It has been observed that almost all the remarkable titles of the Deity are employed in describing and praising the person addressed here. He is called "Elohim" in v. 2; "Adonai," v. 12; "Shaddai," v. 15; "Jehovah," v. 17; "Jah," v. 19; and "Al," v. 20. The Hebrew names of God have, each of them, a distinct and peculiar meaning. No one word will suffice for them all. The vague use of the terms "God" and "Lord" in our translation can never convey to the reader's mind the ideas which the original expressions, if properly translated, would bear. R. II. Ryland.

The general structure of the Psalm, notwithstanding the difficulties which beset many portions of it, is clear and well defined. It consists of the following divisions: 1. An introduction which, with true lyric animation, sets before us the victorious march of God, the deliverances He has accomplished for His people, and the loud exultation to which they are called in consequence (vs. 1-6). 2. Then follows a glance at the former history—the journey of Israel through the wilderness, under the immediate guidance and care of God (vs. 7-10); the triumphant occupation of the land of Canaan, and the flight of the hostile kings (vs. 11-14); the choice of Zion as the abode of God, and His solemn entry into it (vs. 15-18). 3. The Psalmist, contemplating the glorious results of this abode of God in Zion, calls upon all Israel to praise Him, chiefly because He will punish all the enemies of His people (vs. 19-23). 4. The next strophe reverts to a description of the triumphal procession (vs. 24-27). 5. The hope is expressed that all the nations of the world shall acknowledge and submit themselves to Jehovah who dwelleth in Zion (vs. 28-31). 6. The Psalm closes with a summons to all the kingdoms of the earth to praise God (vs. 32-35).

1. The Psalm opens with a reference to the watchword (Num. 10 : 35), with which the ark was wont to set forward during the journeys in the wilderness. "Rise up, O Jehovah, and let Thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate Thee flee before Thy face." "I cannot doubt," says Calvin, "that Moses dictated this form of prayer for all ages, in order that the faithful, relying on the ark of the covenant as the visible symbol of God's presence, might rest sure that they would be safe." P.—The first verse is copied from the watchword of Israel when on the march through the wilderness (Num. 10 : 35), but with a significant change. What was there expressed as a wish is here stated as a fact of certain occurrence. This is in condensed form the theme of the whole Psalm, as it is a fact verified in all human history. T. W. C.

2. The figures here employed occur elsewhere. They describe forcibly the real weakness, the easy and instantaneous overthrow, of the strongest earthly power when arrayed against God. P.

2, 3. The truth is emphasized by the familiar Scripture figures of smoke driven by the wind (Hos. 13 : 3), and wax melted by the fire (Psalm 97 : 5; Micah 1 : 4). But the presence of God before which the wicked flee in dismay and confusion is just that which kindles the exultant joy of the righteous. T. W. C.

The righteous. Here, Israel as a nation regarded in its ideal character, and as placed in contrast with its heathen oppressors, "the wicked."

4. Cast up a highway; the figure being borrowed from the custom of Eastern monarchs, who sent heralds and pioneers before them to make all the necessary preparations—to remove obstructions, etc., along the route which they intended to follow. Great military roads were mostly the work of the Romans, and were almost unknown before the Persian and Grecian periods. P.—The God of Israel is thought of as marching at the head of His people through the Arabian desert; before whom, therefore, as before other kings in like circumstances, a highway should be cast up; mountains levelled; valleys filled; the crooked made straight and the rough smooth—for His march. C.

"Sing unto God, sing praises to His name; cast up a way for Him that is riding through the wilderness." Who is He that is riding through the wilderness, that we should pay Him this respect? "He," says the Psalmist, "who cannot be described." "His name is Jah." His name and His nature are involved

in the name and nature of the Godhead. Jehovah, the Self-existent One. He who led the armies of Israel through the wilderness, when they first came up from Egypt was Christ. He who brought the captives home from Babylon was Christ. Christ, therefore, is intended here, under the image of one riding *through the wilderness, not upon the heavens*, at the head of the returning captives. "His name is Jah;" Christ's name is Jehovah. *Horsley*. — He that is marching along has the salvation of His people as His aim; "Jah is His name, therefore exult ye before Him." His essential name is Jah, the attestation of Himself whereby He makes Himself knowable and namable, consists in this, that He is the God of salvation who in the might of free grace pervades and overrules all history. This name is for His people a fountain of exultation. D.

By the attribution and performance of praise unto Him, doth He account His name, His power, His wisdom, and justice, and Himself to be exalted thereby. What else do these expressions in Scripture imply wherein it is asserted, that by this high duty of praise the high Jehovah is exalted, His sublime perfections extolled and lifted up? How high must be that duty that adds height to the high God, that magnifies the great God, and glorifies the God of glory! *S. Fairclough*.

5. The lofty One who is enthroned in the heaven of glory, rules in history here below and takes an interest in the most lowly, following His own with rich help in all the circumstances and relationships of their life. He takes the place of a father to the orphans. He successfully advocates the cause of the widow. D. — The character and attributes of God, and His gracious dealings with His people, are now alleged as the reason why He should be praised. The "fatherless" and the "widows" are mentioned as examples of those who most need succor and protection. As Arndt says: "The meaning of the Holy Ghost is, that God the Lord is a gracious, friendly God and King, whose first, highest, and principal work it is to give most attention to those persons who ought to be most pitied, because they are helpless and comfortless. Great potentates in the world do not act thus; they respect the noblest and richest in the land, the men who may adorn their court, and strengthen their power and authority. But the highest glory of God is to compassionate the miserable." God is both the loving *Father* and the righteous *Judge*; and the several classes of the lonely, the destitute, the oppressed, the captives, are mentioned as so

many instances of those who have experienced both His care and His righteousness, in order that from these the conclusion may be drawn in all similar cases. P.

It is a beautiful view of the character of the eternal Parent of all His creatures that He fills all the parental relations. "A Father of the fatherless." And His beloved Son well caught in this, as in everything, His Father's mind: "I will not leave you orphans." There are fatherless ones much worse than the fatherless, and there are widows of a far deeper sorrow than the bereaved. There is the man that walks this earth and yet has no relationship with heaven. There are women who are widows even in their own inner life. J. V.

6. Elohim is one who brings solitary or isolated ones to dwell in the house. House, *i.e.*, family-bond, domestic circle, is the antithesis of *solitary* or recluse. D. — In setting the family at the fountain-head of human history, God only insured a representation of Himself which should be perpetual and indestructible. The familiar walls of home made with hands might fall away, but the work of the Divine Builder still remained. The best work of that Builder was silent and invisible, and it was through the homes that God was leading us to Him. These Divine ingredients were the chief things about home, and without the experience of relations with God a person was homeless, even in a palace. *S. E. Herrick*.

Home, that briefest word of our good old Saxon tongue—there lies in it the wealth of all language, of all affection, of all virtuous joy, of all pure memories, of all innocent hopes; the prattle of the infant, the gleeful laugh of childhood, the song of the maiden, the cheerful labor, the merry pastime, the sweet repose of evening when toil is ended, the united meal, the household stories, music, and diversions, the various ages, interests, and plans revolving about one centre, and that centre *love*. Whose eye does not moisten with unbidden tears at the thought of home? These four letters are the chord of human happiness for every gamut; whenever the scale of life begins, these letters are its perfect consonance. "God setteth the solitary in families." This was His institution at the beginning, and He ordained it to be perpetual. J. P. T.

The home is the instrument of a double education. Its function is to develop the Divine image in parent and in child. As the first step to the fulfilment of His purpose in restoring man to His own image, God set "the solitary in families," He laid the foundation of the

home as the fundamental human institution, the foundation of all true order, the spring of all true development in human society. Out of the home State and Church were to grow ; by the home they were both to be established. And so God took the dual head of the first human home, the father and mother, and made them as gods to their children, and He set them there to study the pain and the burden of the godhead as well as the power and the joy. This was the only way by which man could gain the knowledge of the mind and heart of God. *J. B. Brown.*

Measure what home love is worth to society. Estimate the healing, comforting, purifying, elevating influence which is ever flowing forth from this fountain, and you will understand the sacred ministry of the home to the higher culture of mankind. It is a mighty restraint of evil passions. It is the centrifugal force which continually widens the orbit of life, and bears us into the light of distant suns. In the home every unselfish endeavor to lift and bear the burdens of the dear ones around fills the very atmosphere with music of light and joy. *Ibid.*

It is at home that the blessedness of the parental relationship is learned, and the mind is turned to the great Father. It is at home that love is cultivated, and the heart is opened to Him whose name is Love. It is at home that self-restraint is practised, and that those passions which excite to rebellion against God are held in check. It is at home that intense desires for the welfare of those dependent on us are awakened, and that the need of Divine help is so strongly felt as to demand expression in prayer. In a word, home is the very nursery of religion. *J. C. Harrison.*

If we desire a model home we must be willing to work for it—with brain and heart as well as hands. Children should receive their first lessons in usefulness around the family hearth. If more time and labor were expended to make homes—homes worthy of the name—the wrongdoings of sons and daughters would not so often plant unhappiness and discontent in their parents' declining years. The mother of a family should always be found at home to welcome husband and children when they return from the cares and lessons of the day. Everything seems dreary and cheerless when mother is away. There are no smiles and loving words of welcome ; no one to inquire about the successes and failures of the work undertaken. The remembrance of a loving word or smile will often gladden the whole day. A mother's tact will do much toward inventing ways and

means to interest the little flock growing up around her, but to have a real home the father must contribute his part toward making the house in which his family dwells more than a mere shelter from the summer's heat and the winter's cold. His leisure hours belong to his wife and children, and no matter how monotonous the home life may be, it is his duty to help and share the burdens and cares of the one he has promised to love, cherish, and protect. Young people must have recreation of some kind. It is natural and necessary, and needs much thought and care in the selection thereof on behalf of their elders. *Anon.*

The most effective religious influence you exert upon your sons and daughters comes from the *example* you set before them. Your character streams into your children ; it enters through their eyes and through their ears every hour. How quick they are to imitate ! No photographic plate is more sensitive to the images which lodge there. Your irritations irritate them ; your dissimulations make them tricky and deceitful ; your malicious gossip sets "their teeth on edge." If you talk "money-money," they will conclude that the chief end of life is to get rich. If you prefer the playhouse to prayer meeting, they will become lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. If you set a decanter on your table, your boys will sip their first wine glasses there. If you give your child a *dollar* for the place of amusement, and only a *dime* for the contribution-box, you teach them that self-indulgence is ten times more important than Christian benevolence. If you live for the world, your children may die in worldliness and be lost forever. Not more surely do you provide the clothes for their bodies, than you weave the habits of their lives and the mind-garments that they will be wearing after you are dead. As clothes are made stitch by stitch, so you weave their character by numberless little things and by your *unconscious influence*. The Christian or unchristian atmosphere of every house is created by the parents. *T. L. Cuyler.*

Friendships in the family require most gentle care and cultivation. We must win each other's love within home-doors just as we win the love of those outside—by the sweet ministries and graces of affection. We must prove ourselves worthy of being loved by those who are nearest ; they will not truly love us unless we do, merely because we are of the same household. We must show ourselves unselfish, thoughtful, gentle, helpful. Home friendships must be formed as all friendships are formed—by the

patient knitting of soul to soul and the slow growing of life into life. Then we must retain home-friends after winning just as we retain other friends—by a thousand little winning expressions in all our intercourse. We cannot depend upon relationship to keep us loved and loving. We must live for each other. We must give as well as receive. We must be watchful of our acts and words. . . . The sweetest, best, happiest, and most perfect earthly home is but a dim picture of the love and gladness of the home in heaven. Heaven is like a holy home, only infinitely sweeter, truer, and better. Home has been called “heaven’s fallen sister.” If in the imperfect homes of this world we find so much gladness in the ties that bind heart to heart and knit life to life, may we not be confident that in the perfect home of our heavenly Father all this gladness will be infinitely deepened and enriched? Love will not be different in heaven; it will be wondrously purified and exalted, but earthly love will live on through death into eternity. J. R. M.

No two words have a more vital importance than Christianity and Home. Underneath the foundations of both Church and State lies the household; it is older also than either of them. There is no such school of Bible-religion in the land as a happy, God-fearing home. No church is effective for restraint from evil and for growth in all Christian graces as “the church in the house.” There stands the domestic altar. There is felt the influence that moulds character from the cradle to the judgment-seat; such a home on earth is the surest preparation for the home eternal in the heavens. Of this “church in the house” the parents are the God-ordained pastors. T. L. C.

The Church has always been the strength of the home. The Jews, among ancients, and the Christians since, have been the home-makers; their civilization the outgrowth of the domestic relation. Under pagan Rome the family was so broken up that special laws were passed offering favors to those who reared families.

The Socialistic Congress at Geneva, in 1869, enacted “the abolition of marriage, so far as it is a political, religious, judicial, or civil institution.” The ultimate proposition of atheism is that all children shall be cared for by the State. On the other hand, religion nurses all the domestic affections. Belief in the Fatherhood of God strengthens and sanctifies the filial regard. The love of God, the higher *agapa*, deepens the affection of husband and wife, of brother and sister. The eternal hope tightens the grasp with which we hold one another in the death-

less embrace, for such “love can never lose its own.” And *the family is the feeder of the Church.* Most converts are from Christian homes. The parent the best pastor, as originally the father was the household priest. *Anon.* (Read Psalms 127, 128)

7. *O God, in Thy going out before Thy people, in Thy marching through the wilderness, Selah.* The sentence is completed in the next verse, being here divided by a pause of solemn and admiring recollection. The general description of the foregoing verses is now confirmed and illustrated by a reference to the exodus from Egypt and the journey through the wilderness. *Before Thy people*, in the pillar of cloud, as their guide and their commander. *Thy marching*, literally, *Thy stepping, treading*, or more exactly still, *Thy step or tread.* 8. *The earth shook, nay, the heavens dropped, this Sinai, at the presence of God, the God of Israel. Dropped*, discharged drops, rained. The first clause is descriptive of the grand and terrible phenomena attending the theophany at Sinai. (See Ex. 19:16-18.) A. — The Scripture alone can supply ideas answerable to the majesty of this subject. In the Scripture, wherever God is represented as appearing or speaking, everything terrible in nature is called up to heighten the awe and solemnity of the Divine presence. The Psalms and the prophetic books are crowded with instances of this kind. “The earth shook” (says the Psalmist), “the heavens also dropped at the presence of the Lord.” *Burke.*

The proper theme of the Psalm now opens with allusions to the great triumphal march of God at the head of His people through the wilderness, and in their occupation of Canaan. The reference is first to the terrors of the theophany on Sinai, and the glorious majesty of God as there seen. P. — The description fixes upon Sinai as the central point of all the revelations of God during the Mosaic time of redemption, as the place most glorious of them all. The grand phenomena which declared the nearness of God were distributed over the whole journey through the wilderness; they concentrated themselves most gloriously at the giving of the law on Sinai. The earth trembled throughout the wide circuit of the vast granite mountain range, and the heavens dropped, inasmuch as dark thunder-clouds, pierced by incessant lightnings, rested upon Sinai. There, as the primary passages describe it, Jehovah met His people; He came from the east, His people from the west; there they met, and causing the earth to quake, and breaking through

the heavens, He gave them a pledge of the omnipotence which was henceforth to defend and guide them. D.

9. *A rain of free gifts Thou pourest down, O God; Thine inheritance, and (that) exhausted, Thou dost confirm (or strengthen) it.* The first clause probably refers to the abundant and refreshing gifts (of which rain is a natural and common emblem) bestowed upon the people in the wilderness, including manna, quails, and water. A.—“*Thou didst confirm Thine inheritance, when it was weary.*” As at the end of each stage, when they halted, weary with the march, they found such showers of good things awaiting them that they were speedily refreshed. When they were exhausted, God was not. When they were weary, He was not. They were His chosen heritage, and, therefore, although for their good He allowed them to be weary, yet He watchfully tended them and tenderly considered their distresses. In like manner, to this day, the elect of God in this wilderness state are apt to become tired and faint, but their ever-loving Jehovah comes in with timely succors, cheers the faint, strengthens the weak, and refreshes the hungry. By this faithfulness the faith of God’s people is confirmed and their hearts established; if fatigue and want make them waver, the timely supply of grace stays them again upon the eternal foundations. S.

10. **Prepare of Thy goodness for the poor.** The industrious poor man is assured that God will bless his honest endeavors; and while he is sure of God’s benediction, he thinks his poor estate rich. No man is so happy as to have all things; and none so miserable as not to have some. He knows he hath some, and that of the best riches; therefore resolveth to enjoy them, and want the rest with content. He that hath this contentation of heart, be he never so poor, is very rich. T. *Adams.*

11. The sacred poet now passes to the actual occupation of the Holy Land. *The Lord (Adonai) giveth (the) word.* The noun “word” (which is found only in poetry) is used in 77:8, of the “word of promise;” in Hab. 3:9, apparently of the “word of power,” or “word of victory.” Perhaps both meanings may be combined here. It is in virtue of God’s word of promise that Israel takes possession of Canaan; it is by His word of power that the enemies of Israel are discomfited. “God speaks—and the victory is won.” P.—Singing women celebrated the deliverance of Israel from Pharaoh’s host, their emancipation from Jabin’s power

by the overthrow of Sisera, the victory of Jephthah over the Ammonites, and the victorious duel of David with Goliath; on this occasion also God’s decisive word will go forth, and of the women that tell the good tidings, like Miriam and Deborah, there will be a great host. V. 12 describes the theme of the triumphant exultation. D.

The Lord did give His Word at His ascension, and there were a multitude of them that published it, and by this means kings of armies were put to flight; they conquered by the Word; there is not such another way to rout kings and their armies. W. *Strong.*—The Bible is our constitution and our bill of rights, as well as the code of moral and spiritual law. The man who imbibes its principles will never be a slave to superstition, to ecclesiastical pretenders, to civil tyrants, to his own evil passions. The Bible makes a man a free man physically, spiritually, mentally, morally and in his civil status. The intolerance, uncharity, persecution, and other evil traits which crop out of ecclesiastical organizations are all directly contrary to the teaching, example, and spirit of our Lord and Master. . . . The Bible is chiefly valued for spiritual guidance, and for the knowledge it gives us of our future destiny and condition. But it has a lower, which is yet the highest earthly value. The Bible is a great political factor. It is the armory in which men equip themselves for the defence of their civil and religious liberties. Its standard of human rights and of manhood is higher than men ever wrought out for themselves. It sets aside all claim to dominance over man by any authority less than his Creator. The Bible does this as the Word of God. Try to tear that book to pieces and you are trying to destroy the eternal charter of human liberty. . . . Yes, this Bible has been blessed by God Almighty. It carries a blessing, like the ark of the covenant, to the home and heart, where it is reverently received. It promotes intelligence, higher education, freedom of thought, good citizenship, everything desirable in the heart, the home, the nation. It works, not as a charm, signed and sealed by some earthly official; but with the blessing of the Almighty Spirit it enlarges, purifies, enriches and guides through the earthly life to the everlasting habitations. *Interior.*

The marvellous unity, the infinite variety, the matchless sublimity, the inimitable pathos, the power over souls, of this unique and incomparable book; its holy law, against which

fight men's subtlest and most inveterate lusts, its attractiveness for all classes, for all centuries, in all lands; the magnificent ideals presented by it; the invisible but unwasting power which goes everywhere with it to uplift society, to ennoble civilization, as well as to bless persons and households—all these things and others leave us no more in doubt as to whether the Bible came from God through man, or from man himself in his uncertain inquiring wit, than we are in doubt whether light was braided in human workshops, or the ocean was poured from a million tin-cups. The Bible silently, by its progress on the earth, defies the world to make another equal or superior to it. R. S. S.

Admissions of Leading Sceptics of France, England and America.

It was not with art and apparatus that the Gospel extended itself throughout the world, and that its ravishing beauty impenetrated men's hearts. This Divine book, the only book indispensable for the Christian, only needs to be meditated upon to carry into the soul the love of its Author, and the desire to fulfil His precepts. Never has virtue spoken a language so delightful. Never has the profoundest wisdom expressed itself at once with so much of energy, and with so much of simplicity. One cannot quit the reading without feeling himself better than before. I confess to you that the majesty of the Scriptures amazes me, the holiness of the Gospel speaks to my heart! See the books of the philosophers, with all their pomp, how petty they are beside this! Can it be that a book at once so sublime and so simple has been the work of man? Can it be that He whose history it presents was Himself only a man? *Rousseau.*

The pagan moralists lack life and color, and even the noble Stoic, Marcus Antoninus, is too high and refined for an ordinary child. Take the Bible as a whole; make the severest deductions which fair criticism can dictate for shortcomings and positive errors; eliminate all that it is not desirable for children to occupy themselves with; and there still remains in this old literature a vast residuum of moral beauty and grandeur. And then consider the great historical fact that for three centuries this book has been woven into the life of all that is best and noblest in English history; that it is written in the noblest and purest English, and abounds in exquisite beauties of mere literary form; and that it forbids the veriest hind who never left his village to be ignorant of the existence of other countries and other civilizations, and of a

great past, stretching back to the furthest limits of the oldest nations in the world. By the study of what other book could children be so much humanized, and made to feel that each figure in that vast historical procession fills, like themselves, but a momentary space in the interval between two eternities, and earns the blessings or the curses of all time, according to its effort to do good and hate evil, even as they also are earning their payment for their work? *Huxley.*

View it in what light we may, the Bible is a very surprising phenomenon. This collection of books has taken such a hold on the world as has no other. In all the temples of Christendom is its voice lifted up, week by week. The sun never sets on its gleaming page. It goes equally to the cottage of the plain man and the palace of the king. It is woven into the literature of the scholar, and it colors the talk of the street. It blesses us when we are born; gives names to half Christendom; rejoices with us; has sympathy for our mourning; tempers our grief to finer issues. It lifts man above himself; our best of uttered prayers are in its storied speech, wherewith our fathers and the patriarchs prayed. The timid man, about awaking from this dream of life, looks through the glass of Scripture, and his eye grows bright; he does not fear to stand alone, to tread the way unknown and distant, to take the death-angel by the hand, and bid farewell to wife, and babes, and home. Some thousand famous writers come up in this century, to be forgotten in the next. But the silver cord of the Bible is not loosed, nor its golden bowl broken, as Time chronicles his tens of centuries passed by. It is only a heart that can speak, deep and true, to a heart; a mind to a mind; a soul to a soul; wisdom to the wise, and religion to the pious. There must then be in the Bible mind, heart, and soul, wisdom and religion. Were it otherwise, how could millions find it their lawgiver, friend, and prophet? Some of the greatest of human institutions seem built on the Bible; such things will not stand on heaps of chaff, but on mountains of rock. *Theodore Parker.*

12. This and the next two verses wear the air of being a fragment of one of those ancient battle-songs, sung by the women after the defeat of the foe. The fact that they have thus been torn from their original context accounts for the great obscurity which hangs over them. It is, indeed, almost hopeless now to understand the allusions.

She that tarrieth at home; the mistress of the household, so called as keeping house, while

her husband goes forth to battle ; an expression peculiarly in conformity with Eastern customs. *Divideth the spoil*, "distributes among her daughters and handmaidens the share of the spoil" which her husband has brought home. Hence the mother of Sisera is represented as anticipating the share of the spoil which would fall to her lot (Jud. 5 : 30). P

13. The lying between the sheepfolds is an emblem of prosperous peace, which points back to the song of Deborah (Jud. 5 : 16). Such a time is now also before Israel, a time of peaceful prosperity increased by rich spoil. Everything shall gleam and glitter with silver and gold. Israel is God's turtle-dove (74 : 19). Therefore the new condition of prosperity is compared with the play of colors of a dove basking in the rays of the sun. Its wings are then as if overlaid with silver. D.—Nearly all see, in the dove and the glittering of her wings in the sunshine, an emblem of prosperity and peace, though some suppose that the allusion is to the bright armor of the warriors, glittering in the sunshine. According to Hengstenberg, the Israelites, to whom the address is directed, are described figuratively as the wings of the doves, or they are *like* doves whose wings glitter with silver and gold. The allusion is to the play of colors on the wings of the dove in sunshine. This denotes the peaceful, and, at the same time, *splendid* condition enjoyed by Israel, in the lap of prosperity. The same idea is carried out in the second figure (v. 14), that of the *snow*, an image of the bright gleam of heaven which fell on the darkened land on the prosperous termination of the war ; when the Lord scatters kings, the light of prosperity illuminates the darkness of the land, just as dark Zalmon becomes white when covered with snow. Zalmon is a hill mentioned in Jud. 9 : 48, situated in the neighborhood of Shechem, and covered with a thick wood, so that, as Luther says, "it might be called in German a *Schwartzwald*, or dark forest, the dark or black mountain." This, on the whole, is preferable to any of the other interpretations. It has the merit of simplicity, and it yields a fairly satisfactory sense. P.

15. *A mount of God (is) Mount Bashan, a mount of peaks (or ridges) is Mount Bashan.* The first phrase means a mountain showing forth the creative power of God by its vastness. *Mount Bashan*, not a single eminence, but the lofty range of Antilibanus, also called *Hermon*, and by other races, *Sion* and *Sirion*. The last two names would be apt to suggest, by a fortuitous resemblance, that of the holy hill of *Zion*.

A mount of peaks or ridges, *i.e.*, not a detached mountain, but a chain with many lofty summits, forming the northern boundary of Bashan. At the same time, the expressions of this verse would necessarily suggest the idea of great states or kingdoms, of which mountains are the standing symbols. A.

The immediate reference to the mountain range of Bashan confirms the conjecture that the poem is to be connected with the war between Israel and the various Syrian nations from beyond the Euphrates, recorded in 2 Sam. 10 : 15, 19. The battle was fought at Helam, near the Euphrates, belonging to the half tribe of Manasseh, to which Bashan had been assigned as part of its territory. The lofty mountain range of Bashan was therefore in sight of the army on its homeward march. It is called "a mountain of God," as conspicuous among the works of God. The personification of these great mountains as full of envy, when the triumphant host passed them by, and went by preference to the little hill of Zion, is superb. *De Witt*.—He makes the mountains of Bashan an emblem of the hostile powers east of the Jordan. These stand over against the people of God as the mighty mountains of Bashan, which rise in precipitous and at the top only slightly flattened peaks, stand over against lowly undulating Zion. D.

Bashan is the high snow-summit of Hermon, the extreme limit of Bashan. The world's physical greatness must yield to the Church's spiritual grandeur. The "mountain of God" is here an emblem of the *world-kingsdoms*, which are great only by the grace of God. A great hill reminds us of the *creative* power of God. Hence, "the hill of Elohim" (the general name of God as *the Creator*) stands in contrast to *the hill* which (v. 16) "the Lord" (Jehovah) will dwell in forever. *Fausset*.

16. The end of all this manifestation of God's power on behalf of His chosen, of all these splendid victories, is the occupation of the Holy Land. He has given it to His people, that He may abide and reign in the midst of them. He has chosen, not the lofty range of Bashan, but the more lowly Zion for His seat ; and to this new sanctuary He comes from Sinai, attended by "an innumerable company of angels." P.—Not only Elohim has chosen it as His seat, but it will also continue to be so forever ; Jehovah will continue to dwell in it forever. Grace is superior to nature and the Church to the world, however powerful and majestic this seems ; Zion maintains its honor over against the mountains of Bashan. D.

17. In solemn triumph, like a victor who leads trains of captives and spoils in long array, God enters His sanctuary in Zion. P.—The last words of the verse are obscure, but seem most probably to mean that the same glorious theophany which once took place on Sinai is now renewed on Zion, with particular reference, as some imagine, to the presence of the ark and the tables of stone in the one case as a perpetual memorial, and even a perpetual renewal, of the legislation in the other. This fine poetical identification of the two mountains hallowed by God's presence may have been in the mind of the apostle when he drew that sublime contrast or parallel between them (Heb. 12 : 18-24). Under the law, Sinai was renewed in Zion. Under the Gospel, Zion superseded Sinai. A.

The chariots of God are twenty thousand. Other countries, which in the former verse were symbolically referred to as "high hills," gloried in their chariots of war; but Zion, though far more lowly, was stronger than they, for the omnipotence of God was to her as myriads of chariots. The Lord of hosts could summon more forces into the field than all who boasted in their armies; His horses of fire and chariots of fire would be more than a match for their fiery steeds and flashing cars. The original is grandly expressive: "The war chariots of Elohim are myriads, a thousand thousands." S.

18. *Thou hast gone up to the high place; Thou hast captured a captivity; Thou hast taken gifts among mankind, and (even among) rebels, (so as) to dwell (here), Lord, God!* In order to establish Zion as His earthly dwelling-place, God has encountered all opposing powers, vanquished them, and forced them to pay tribute, even the stoutest and most stubborn. The sign of the conquest being finished is the conqueror's return to his throne, whether upon earth or in heaven. *Captured a captivity, i.e.,* taken captive a multitude of enemies. The *gifts* meant are the forced gifts of the conquered. *Among men, i.e.,* while present among them as their conqueror, and by implication *from* them. *Even rebels,* even the most rebellious, are compelled to submit. In other words, the conquest is complete. According to the military figures here used, it would seem to be implied that the gifts thus extorted by the conqueror are distributed among his followers. To *receive gifts*, on the one hand, and *bestow gifts*, on the other, are correlative ideas and expressions, so that Paul, in applying this description of a theocratic triumph to the conquests of our Saviour,

substitutes one of these expressions for the other (Eph. 4 : 9). He also, in his comment on the passage, justly represents the ascension there described as necessarily implying a previous descent. In other words, victory presupposes conflict. A.

This Psalm typifies the conquests of the Church under her Divine Leader, Christ. He, indeed, "who was with the Church in the wilderness" (Acts 7 : 38), is the *Lord* described in this ideal ascension. Hence Paul (Eph. 4 : 8) applies this language to describe His real ascension, when, having conquered sin, death, and hell, the Lord of glory triumphantly entered heaven, attended by throngs of adoring angels, to sit on the throne and wield the sceptre of an eternal dominion. The phrase, **received gifts for** (or literally, *among*) **men**, is by Paul, "gave gifts to men." Both describe the acts of a conqueror who receives and distributes spoils. The Psalmist uses "*receiving*," as evincing the success; Paul, "*gave*," as the act of the conqueror who, having subdued his enemies, proceeds to reward his friends. The special application of the passage by Paul was in proof of Christ's exaltation. What the Old Testament represents of His descending and ascending corresponds with His history. He who descended is the same who has ascended. As then ascension was an element of His triumph, so is it now; and He who in His humiliation must be recognized as our vicarious sacrifice and the High-priest of our profession, must also be adored as Head of His Church and Author of all her spiritual benefits. *Fausset.*

Paul interprets in the light and in the sense of the historical fulfilment. For the ascension of Elohim is in historical fulfilment none other than the ascension of Christ; this latter was, as the Psalm describes it, a triumphal procession (Col. 2 : 15); and what the Victor has gained over the powers of darkness and of death, He has gained not for His own enrichment, but for behoof of men; they are gifts which He now distributes among men, and which turn out to the advantage even of those who have gone astray. So the apostle takes the words, turning "received" into "gave." The gifts are the *charismata* coming down from the Exalted One upon the Church—a bestowal of blessing which stands in a causal connection with His victory; for as Victor He is also the possessor of the blessing, His gifts are, as it were, the spoils of the victory gained by Him over sin, death, and Satan. The apostle is all the more justified in giving this interpretation, as Elohim is celebrated in what follows as the

Lord, who brings forth even from death. In the historical fulfilment this praise belongs to Him who, as Theodoret remarks, has opened the prison-house of death, which for us had no exit, and burst the brazen gates and crushed the iron bolts—viz., to Jesus Christ, who now has the keys of death and of Hades. D.

The resurrection of Christ is the basis of all that we have and hope and love in Christ, but especially have we in it the surety of the hope of eternal life, because thereby all fear of death has been banished, and future blessedness and life have become a reality in Christ Jesus. He is our Head, and we through faith are members of His body. And since our Head has overcome sin and death and Satan, we partake of the triumph and the victory. For He has conquered our enemies for us and not for Himself. The victory is ours, as is also the triumph. When a ruler or a general conquers the enemies of a kingdom, he indeed triumphs, but the fruits and glories of the victory belong to the whole country and to all the citizens. Therefore all Christians triumph with Christ in His glorious resurrection. *Gossner.*

Thou hast led captivity captive. The ancient prophecy of David is fulfilled on the foot of Mount Olivet. There Christ conquered the allied principalities and powers, the devil, sin, death, and hell, and deprived them of the instruments wherewith they enslaved men. *C. Evans.*—He led those captive who had led us captives, and who if He had not interposed would have held us captive forever. Nay, He *led captivity itself captive*, having quite broken the power of sin and Satan. As He was the Death of death, so He was the Captivity of captivity (Hos. 13 : 14). This speaks the complete victory which Jesus Christ obtained over our spiritual enemies ; it was such, that through Him *we also are more than conquerors*—that is, triumphers. H. — What a representation for well-assured belief ! all my spiritual foes overcome, disarmed, exposed, so that I have no more to do than to set forth the victory of Christ and share in its joy ! *Van O.*

Thou hast received gifts for men ; He gave gifts to men, so the apostle reads it (Eph. 4 : 8). For He received that He might give ; on His head the anointing of the Spirit was poured, that from Him it might descend to the skirts of His garments. And He gave what He had received ; having received power to give eternal life, He bestows it upon *as many as were given Him* (John 17 : 2). H. — No sooner is Christ inaugurated in His throne, but He scatters His gifts. He gives the gift of gifts, the gift of the

Holy Ghost. “If thou knewest the gift of God,” said Christ to the Samaritan woman. That gift was the water of life, and that water of life was the Spirit, as John, who knew best His mind, gave the interpretation, “This spake He of the Spirit.” Such a gift was never before but when God gave His Son. “God so loved the world that He gave His Son ;” and Christ so loved the world that He gave His Spirit. But consider especially to whom this Spirit was given. “Unto us a Son is given,” said the prophet (Isa. 9 : 6) ; and “unto us the Holy Ghost is given,” said the apostle (Rom. 5 : 5) ; and yet above all consider the reasons of this gift in reference to thyself. Was it not to make thee a temple and receptacle of the Holy Ghost ? Admire the condescending, glorious, unspeakable love of Christ in this ! It was infinite love to come down into our nature when He was incarnate ; but this is more, to come down into thy heart by His Holy Spirit ; He came near to us then, but as if that were not near enough, He comes nearer now, for now He unites Himself unto thy person, now He comes and dwells in thy soul by His Holy Spirit. *Isaac Ambrose.*

Of itself the departure of our risen Lord would neither have permanently illuminated the reflections of the Church nor quickened the graces of its separate members. But He left this earth in His bodily form, to return as a Quickening Spirit, in force and virtue, before He comes to judgment. He ascended up on high to obtain gifts for men ; and having received of the Father, as the bounteous firstfruits of His opening and omnipotent intercession, the promise of the Holy Ghost, He shed upon the earth those wondrous gifts which the first Christians saw and heard. H. P. L. — The work of men’s deliverance, which Christ began while He was on earth, He carries on and completes from heaven. He “received gifts for men” — the manifold gifts of the Holy Ghost. He who gave once gives always. These are gifts for men ; and as long as there are men needing these gifts, they will not cease. And that will be always, even to the end of the world. In a world of sorrow such as ours, when will the office of a Comforter cease ? In a world of sin such as ours, when will the office of a Sanctifier be out of date ? *Trench.*

Who can adequately describe the magnificence of the benefits dealt out by the exalted Saviour, and the munificence with which He distributes these to all who approach His throne of grace with empty hands but earnest hearts ? With all spiritual blessings from heaven we are

blessed in Christ, and what has already rejoiced millions is still in the future appointed for millions more ; yea, the greater the necessity, the richer the fulfilment here promised. *Van O.* —He came from the infinite to the finite that He might conduct God's children up through the finite into the infinite forever. He leads them up with the voice of mercy on His lips, with the memory of suffering in His heart ; and the front ranks of His innumerable army raise their song, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, be glory forever." *Ker.*

The rebellious. This completes the picture of the triumph. *All*—even those nations which hold out the longest in their stubborn resistance, and refuse to submit themselves to the Great Victor—must finally acknowledge His sway. All shall be united in one kingdom, and God the Lord shall reign in the midst of them. This is the great prophetic idea which recurs so often in the writings of Psalmists and prophets. God is the King of all the earth ; and, in spite of all opposition, His kingdom shall be set up, and on the throne of that kingdom His Son, His Anointed (the Messiah, the Christ), shall reign. Hence it is that Paul (Eph. 4 : 9) applies this verse to the resurrection and triumphant ascension of Christ. The apostle sees in the literal Old Testament fact a higher spiritual significance. The ascent of the ark, in which God was present, into Zion, prefigured the ascent of Christ into heaven. As God came down to fight for His people, so Christ had descended to this earth for the salvation of men. As on the return of the ark the captives and the spoil appeared in the procession, so on the return of Christ in triumph to heaven (Col. 2 : 15) He led captive sin, and death, and hell, and all evil powers. As God had *taken* tribute among men, which He, however, as the victorious monarch of Israel, had given to Israel, so Christ also had taken gifts among men (in His human nature and through His work on earth) which He now, as ascended Lord, gave to men. The apostle sees that when a king takes, he takes to give, and therefore substitutes the one word for the other, without at all putting the one word as the *translation* of the other. He seizes the idea, and represents it in its true fulfilment. *P.*

Among the rebellious, that *the Lord God might dwell among them* ; that He might set up a church in a rebellious world, in which He would dwell by His Word and ordinances, as of old in the sanctuary ; that He might set up His throne and Christ might dwell in the hearts of particular persons that had been rebellious.

The gracious intention of Christ's undertaking was to rear up the *tabernacle of God among men*, that He might dwell with them, and they might themselves be living temples to His praise (Ezek. 37 : 27). *H.*

"And it came to pass, while He *blessed* them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." His last appearance was with hands extended in benediction. His last words were blessings. He came from heaven bringing gifts to men. His entire life ministry was a constant benefaction. And now, as He leaves the world that scorned the gifts and crucified the Giver, His parting words are intoned with love—His hands extended in benediction. Shall we not believe that from His home in the heavens our ascended Lord is still sending His priceless gifts to men, and over our lives His hands are still extended in blessing ? And shall not this faith move us to deeper love to Him, and firmer loyalty to His cause ? *E. K. Young.*

The innermost chamber of the Divine Presence is open now, and sinful men have access, with confidence by the faith of Him, wherever He has gone before. Right into the secret of God's pavilion we can go, now and here, knowledge and faith treading the path which Jesus has opened, and coming to the Father by Him. Right into the blaze of the glory we shall go hereafter ; for He has gone to prepare a place for us, and when He overcame the sharpness of death, He opened the gate of heaven to all believers. *A. M.*—Every believer may say, Christ did not only die and rise again, but He ascended into heaven to take possession thereof for me, to prepare a place for me. He standeth there in the second part of His suretyship to bring me safe thither, and to present me in a glorious manner, "not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." He is therefore exercising His priestly office for me, pleading the perfection of His own righteousness and the virtue of His blood. He is there ready to answer the accusations of the law, the devil, and sin for me. *Bunyan.*

Christ's consolation to His disciples in the parting hour was, "I go to prepare a place for you." How much was included in these words we shall never know till we, like Him, see of the travail of His soul, and like Him are satisfied. But we can dimly see that, on the one hand, His death, and, on the other hand, His entrance into that holiest of all, make ready for us the many mansions of the Father's house. He was crucified for our offences, He was raised

again for our justification. He is passed through the heavens to stand our forerunner in the presence of God; and by all these mighty acts He prepares the heavenly places for us. As the sun behind a cloud, which hides it from us, is still pouring out its rays on far-off lands, so He, veiled in dark sunset clouds of Calvary, sent the energy of His passion and cross into the unseen world and made it possible that we should enter there. "When Thou didst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the gates of the kingdom of heaven to all believers." As one who precedes a mighty host, provides and prepares rest for their weariness, and food for their hunger, in some city on their line of march, and having made all things ready, is at the gates to welcome their travel-stained ranks when they arrive, and guide them to their repose; so He has gone before, our forerunner, to order all things for us there. It may be that unless Christ were in heaven, our Brother as well as our Lord, it were no place for mortals. Be that as it may, this we know, that the Father prepares a place for us by the eternal counsel of His love, and by the all-sufficient work of Christ, by whom we have access to the Father. A. M.

Let us not lose out of our conception of the glorified Christ this truth, that He is actually human still. His body is changed, glorified, as our bodies shall be changed, glorified in our resurrection; yet it is still the same body which He had on the earth. His humanity was carried up to heaven. As he never for a moment ceased to be God while here on the earth in lowly flesh, so He has never for a moment ceased to be man since ascending into the heavenly places. The Godhead and the humanity are forever inseparable. The tender compassion of the Jesus of the Gospels was not lost when He went up out of our sight and was exalted to the throne. Our King has a human heart, with human affections, sympathies, and feelings. Our Lord, to whom we pray, on whose arm we lean in weakness, to whose mercy we flee when we have sinned, to whom we turn for help in weakness and comfort in sorrow, is our Brother, with a nature like ours. How near it brings Him to us to think of Him as really human still, in His eternal glory! How it exalts our thought of the dignity of humanity to remember that one of our race is on the throne of thrones! J. R. M.

The ascension is the completion of the resurrection. It corresponds to the supernatural birth, and the evangelist whose record of the nativity is the fullest is also he who principally tells us of the humanity, which had been born

in Bethlehem, being taken up to the throne of God. The ascension witnesses to the completeness of His sacrifice, to its acceptance by the Father, to the presence within the veil of our all-powerful intercessor, to the elevation to supreme authority of the Man who is our Brother. The eternal Word ascended where He had been from before the beginning, but the manhood is new to the throne of the universe. Where He is, there shall also His servants be; and as He is, so shall they too become. Even now we may, in a very real sense, live with Christ in heavenly places; and if we believe that He has gone up on high, we too should "set our affections" and thoughts "on things above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God." For where our "treasure" is, there should and shall our "hearts" be also. The disciples showed us how we should think of the ascension when they worshipped Him, thus declared Him to be the Son of God, and then turned all the more joyfully to their homely tasks, and drowned the pain of parting in the flood of joy which poured over their spirits. They made all life worship, every place a temple, and every act and word adoration. Thus joyfully, and with unceasing thankfulness and praise making music in life and lip, should those pass the brief hours of earthly sojourning, whose lives are hid with Christ in God. Where He is, is their home. It becomes them to live here as pilgrims and sojourners. A. M.

19. The description of the great triumphal procession is here suddenly broken off with an ascription of praise to God as the protector and avenger of His people, and is not again resumed till v. 24. *Beareth our burden.* The majesty of God and the tenderness of God are thus ever associated in Holy Scripture. The same God who came once in awful glory to Sinai, and who now, accompanied by myriads of angels, enters into His sanctuary in Zion, is the God who bears the burden which is too heavy for us; or, perhaps, "who bears us," *i.e.*, carries us, as a shepherd when he finds the lost sheep lays it upon his shoulder. P.

He daily beareth our burdens; or, as the Hebrew has it, "day by day beareth." It means that He so knits Himself with us as that all which touches us touches Him; that He takes a share in all our pressing duties, and feels the reflection from all our sorrows and pains. There is something deeper than sympathy in that great Heart, which gathers into itself all hearts, and in that great Being whose being underlies all our beings, and is the root from which we all live and grow. In simple

though profound verity, God has that which is most truly represented to man by calling it a fellow-feeling with our infirmities and sorrows. . . . People talk much rubbish about the "stern Old Testament Deity." Is there anything sweeter, greater, more heart-compelling and heart-softening than such a thought as this—a God that carries men's loads? How all the majesty bows itself and declares itself enlisted on our side when we think that "He that sitteth on the circle of the heavens" is the God that "daily beareth our burdens"! And this is the tone of the Old Testament throughout. A. M.

20. "The issues of death"—the goings forth from under His power. It is God's prerogative to bring His people up from the perils and power of death when He will—which is said here with special reference to the imminent perils of natural destruction from which God had preserved His people. C.—The ways of our departing out of this life are in His hands; and so in this sense of the words, the issue of death is a deliverance in death; not that God will deliver us from dying, but that He will have a care of us in the hour of death, of what kind soever our passage be. *Donne.*

21. The reverse of the previous truth; God will take terrible vengeance on His enemies.

22. I will bring again. No object is supplied, but it is evident from the context that the enemies of Israel are meant. God will bring these back, wherever they may have fled in the hope of safety, and give them up to the vengeance of Israel. From Bashan in *the east*, and from the sea in *the west*, from *the heights* of the mountains, and from *the depths* of the sea (one or both of these antitheses may be designed), they shall be brought back (Amos 9: 1-3). P.—Even if these foes of Israel have hidden themselves in the most remote places, God will fetch them back and make His people the executioners of His righteousness upon them. Over against the hiding in the forests of mountainous Bashan there stands the hiding in the abyss of the sea—the impossible being assumed as possible—as being the deepest place in which they can hide. D.

24, 25. The picture of the triumphal procession to the sanctuary is now resumed (from v. 17). P.—The "goings" of God here thought of are those in which he went forth at the head of the hosts of Israel, and by His providential agencies smote and subdued their enemies. Then he went forth *from* His sanctuary; these goings forth were fitly celebrated *in* the sanctuary after the victory was won.

We have the grand procession here in view; the singers leading the train; the instrumental performers next; and all these *in the midst* of damsels playing the timbrel. This seems to be precisely what the Hebrew words mean. C.—Israel's festival of victory is regarded as a triumphal procession of God Himself, of the King, who reigns in holiness and who has now subjugated and humbled the profane, unholy world. D.

27. Representatives of all the tribes supposed to be *there, i.e.,* in the triumphal march. They seem to be selected, partly with reference to their local habitation, as the northern and southern extremities of Israel; partly because the most remarkable exploits, from the time of Moses to the time of David, were performed by these tribes. A.—*Benjamin the youngest, their ruler.* This recognizes Saul, the first king of Israel, as belonging to the tribe of Benjamin, and the location of the sanctuary within its borders. *Judah* follows, the tribe to which the sceptre of Israel had been permanently attached by the prophecy of Jacob in Gen. 49: 10, confirmed by the promise to David in 2 Sam. 7: 12-16. *Zebulon* and *Naphtali* had possession on the northern boundary of the kingdom, and are mentioned in the song of Deborah as having distinguished themselves by their valor in the early history of the nation. *De Witt.*

"*Benjamin, Judah, Zebulon, Naphtali.*" The same tribes are prominent in the New Testament, as foremost in the battle of the Church against the world. Paul, the "least" of the apostles, was by origin Saul of Benjamin. Christ, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," James and John, the brothers, the other James. Thaddeus, and Simon, were from Judah, and the other apostles were from Naphtalim and Zabulon, or Galilee. *Fausset.*

28-35. The Psalmist now turns in prayer to that God who has ascended into His holy habitation, beseeching Him thence to manifest His power in the subjugation of all enemies; he beholds the nations bringing tribute to Him as to their sovereign; and finally calls upon them to join in loud praise and worship of Him who rules in heaven, and who is the God of Israel. P.

30. In v. 29 the voluntary submission of foreign powers is described. Here the prayer is that God would compel to submission those who oppose themselves. *The beast of the reed,* evidently a symbolical description of Egypt. Either the crocodile is meant, or the hippopotamus. Probably the former, as the latter does not occur as a symbol of Egypt. Egypt is.

selected as an example of the nations of the world, being at this time, no doubt, the leading power. The general sense is sufficiently clear. The Psalmist anticipates the entire subjection of all the princes and nations of the earth to the God who has now seated Himself on His throne in Zion. P.

Egypt appears here as the greatest and most dreaded world-power; Elohim is to set limits to the haughty ones that exalt themselves above Israel and Israel's God. Bulls are an emblem of the kings, and "calves" of the peoples over whom the kings rule; with the one emblem there is associated the idea of defiant self-confidence, with the other that of well-to-do security. D.—The last clause is not a prayer, but a prophecy, built on history: Thou *hast scattered* the war-loving nation, and Thou wilt yet again. C.

31. Egypt and Ethiopia are mentioned as examples of the most wealthy and powerful nations, who will bring their treasures and pour out their gifts before God. P.—They shall come out of Egypt to Jerusalem, as promised above (v. 29), to bring thither their offerings to the true God. So Isaiah (19 : 21, 22). Ethiopia shall hasten her hands toward God; literally, make them run. Lifting up the hands to God is with the Psalmist an act of worship, yet probably in this connection involving the presentation of her gifts to the God of Israel. C.

32. The remaining verses of the Psalm are, in fact, prophetic. Standing in the midst of that future glory, which he anticipates so vividly that it seems already to be present, the Psalmist calls upon all the kingdoms of the world to praise God, whose glory is in heaven, but who has also chosen Zion, there to dwell, and to manifest His glory, as He manifests it in heaven. P.

32-36. To Him who is presented as riding in triumph through His ancient heavens and proclaiming His presence—to Him who, in nature, and still more in the wonders of His spiritual government, out of *His holy place* (Psalm 43 : 3), is terrible, who rules His Church and by His Church rules the world in righteousness—let all nations and kingdoms give honor and power and dominion evermore. *Fausset.*

33. *To Him that rideth upon the heaven of heavens.* Before, He was described in His earthly manifestations as marching through the desert; now, in His celestial glory, as rid-

ing in the heavens of the primeval ages. Long ere this heaven and earth were made, the loftier abodes of the Deity stood fast; before men or angels were created, the splendors of the Great King were as great as now, and His triumphs as glorious. S.

33, 34. Here the writer seems to hear an audible response from the skies, and hence his exclamation at the roar of the thunder, "Lo, He uttereth," etc. Then he demands that all ascribe strength unto God, assigning as the reason the nature and extent of the Divine power. It is revealed in the protection of the chosen people, while at the same time it has its seat in the skies and so extends throughout the universe. T. W. C.

35. *From Thy sanctuaries.* So (110 : 2) "Jehovah shall send the rod of Thy strength out of Zion," as the seat of God's dominion, as the centre *from which* He exercises His power. P.—The taking up of all the kingdoms of the world into the kingdom of God, the great theme of the Apocalypse, is also at bottom the theme of this Psalm. The first half closed with Jehovah's triumphant ascension; the second closes with the results of His victory and triumph, results which embrace the Gentile world. D.

Giveth strength to His people. The Lord is the fountain of all might. He is strong and makes strong; blessed are they who draw from His resources, they shall renew their strength. While the self-sufficient faint, the All sufficient shall sustain the feeblest believer. "*Blessed be God.*" A short but sweet conclusion. Let our souls say Amen to it; and yet again, Amen. S.

The whole Psalm is full of devotion. Its author, the sweet singer of Israel, never soared on so lofty a wing as in these stirring strains, but here, as elsewhere in the Scripture, the human element does not exclude the Divine, nor earth displace heaven, but the glory is always ascribed to the Most High. There is no praise of angels or men, but the poet's genius reverently falls at the feet of his Maker, and over and over gives to Him the praise due to His name. The most glowing, the most spirited, the most powerful hymn in the whole Psalter is at the same time the one most alive with faith and consecration. T. W. C.

PSALM LXIX.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN ; SET TO SHOSHANNIM. A PSALM OF DAVID.

- 1 SAVE me, O God ;
For the waters are come in unto my soul.
- 2 I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing :
I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.
- 3 I am weary with my crying ; my throat is dried :
Mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.
- 4 They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head ;
They that would cut me off, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty :
Then I restored that which I took not away.
- 5 O God, thou knowest my foolishness ;
And my sins are not hid from thee.
- 6 Let not them that wait on thee be ashamed through me, O Lord God of hosts :
Let not those that seek thee be brought to dishonour through me, O God of Israel.
- 7 Because for thy sake I have borne reproach ;
Shame hath covered my face.
- 8 I am become a stranger unto my brethren,
And an alien unto my mother's children.
- 9 For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up ;
And the reproaches of them that reproach thee are fallen upon me.
- 10 When I wept, *and chastened* my soul with fasting,
That was to my reproach.
- 11 When I made sackcloth my clothing,
I became a proverb unto them.
- 12 They that sit in the gate talk of me ;
And *I am* the song of the drunkards.
- 13 But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O LORD, in an acceptable time :
O God, in the multitude of thy mercy,
Answer me in the truth of thy salvation.
- 14 Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink :
Let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters.
- 15 Let not the waterflood overwhelm me,
Neither let the deep swallow me up ;
And let not the pit shut her mouth upon me.
- 16 Answer me, O LORD ; for thy lovingkindness is good :
According to the multitude of thy tender mercies turn thou unto me.
- 17 And hide not thy face from thy servant ;
For I am in distress ; answer me speedily.
- 18 Draw nigh unto my soul, and redeem it :
Ransom me because of mine enemies.
- 19 Thou knowest my reproach, and my shame,
and my dishonour :
Mine adversaries are all before thee.
- 20 Reproach hath broken my heart ; and I am full of heaviness :
And I looked for some to take pity, but there was none ;
And for comforters, but I found none.
- 21 They gave me also gall for my meat ;
And in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.
- 22 Let their table before them become a snare ;
And when they are in peace, *let it become* a trap.
- 23 Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not ;
And make their loins continually to shake.
- 24 Pour out thine indignation upon them,
And let the fierceness of thine anger overtake them.
- 25 Let their habitation be desolate ;
Let none dwell in their tents.
- 26 For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten ;
And they tell of the sorrow of those whom thou hast wounded.
- 27 Add iniquity unto their iniquity .
And let them not come into thy righteousness.
- 28 Let them be blotted out of the book of life,
And not be written with the righteous.
- 29 But I am poor and sorrowful :
Let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high.
- 30 I will praise the name of God with a song,
And will magnify him with thanksgiving.
- 31 And it shall please the LORD better than an ox,

Or a bullock that hath horns and hoofs.
 32 The meek have seen it, and are glad :
 Ye that seek after God, let your heart live.
 33 For the LORD heareth the needy,
 And despiseth not his prisoners.
 34 Let Heaven and earth praise him,
 The seas, and every thing that moveth
 therein.

35 For God will save Zion, and build the cities
 of Judah ;
 And they shall abide there, and have it in
 possession.
 36 The seed also of his servants shall inherit it ;
 And they that love his name shall dwell
 therein.

WHEN and by whom this Psalm was written we have no very certain clue to guide us. All that is certain from the general tenor of the Psalm is, that it was written under circumstances of great and unmerited suffering, by one who was persecuted for righteousness' sake. The zeal which he had shown for the service and honor of God had provoked the hostility of bad men against him, and made him the object of their unholy mockery. In the former part of the Psalm we have the fact of this persecution detailed, in the form of a humble complaint to God, together with an earnest prayer for deliverance. In the latter part there is a marked change of feeling. The sad, humble, subdued, entreating tone in which he had spoken, turns suddenly into a strong outburst of indignant execration. In some of its features this Psalm bears much resemblance to Psalms 35 and 109. In all three Psalms there is the same deep sense of grievous wrong, of innocence unjustly persecuted, and in all alike the same burning indignation is poured in a hot lava-stream of anathemas upon the persecutors. P.

The subject of the Psalm is an ideal person, representing the whole class of righteous sufferers. The only individual in whom the various traits meet is Christ. That He is not, however, the exclusive or even the immediate subject is clear from the confession in v. 5. There is no Psalm, except the twenty-second, more distinctly applied to Him in the New Testament. A.—The whole Psalm is typico-prophetic, so far as it is the account of the history of a life and suffering, whether it be the history of a king or a prophet, fashioned by God into a prophecy in fact of Jesus the Christ, and so far as the Spirit of prophecy has even fashioned the account itself into a word of prophecy concerning the Coming One. D.

This has usually been regarded as a Messianic Psalm. No portion of the Old Testament Scriptures is more frequently quoted in the New, with the exception of Psalm 22. When Jesus drives the buyers and sellers from the Temple (John 2 : 17), His disciples are reminded

of the words of v. 9. When it is said (John 15 : 25) that the enemies of Jesus hated Him without a cause, and this is looked upon as a fulfilment of Scripture, the reference is probably to v. 4 (though it may be also to 35 : 19). To Him, and the reproach which He endured for the sake of God, Paul (Rom. 15 : 3) refers the words of this Psalm (v. 9), "The reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon me." In v. 12 we have a foreshadowing of the mockery of our Lord by the soldiers in the prætorium ; in v. 21, the giving of the vinegar and the gall found their counterpart in the scenes of the crucifixion (Matt. 27 : 34). In John 19 : 28 there is an allusion, probably, to v. 21 of this Psalm (and to 22 : 15). The imprecation in v. 25 is said, in Acts 1 : 20, to have been fulfilled in the case of Judas Iscariot, though, as the words of the Psalm are plural, the citation is evidently made with some freedom. According to Rom. 11 : 9, 10, the rejection of Israel may best be described in the words of vs. 22, 23.

It will be observed that many of these quotations are made generally, by way of illustration and application, rather than as prophecies which have received fulfilment. Enough, however, remains to justify the Messianic sense of the Psalm, provided our interpretation be fair and sober. The broad principle laid down in the introduction to the twenty-second Psalm applies here. The history of prophets and holy men of old is a typical history. They were, it may be said, representative men, suffering and hoping, not for themselves only, but for the nation whom they represented. In their sufferings they were feeble and transient images of the Great Sufferer who by His sufferings accomplished man's redemption ; their hopes could never be fully realized but in the issue of His work, nor their aspirations be truly uttered save by His mouth. But confessions of sinfulness and imprecations of vengeance, mingling with these better hopes and aspirations, are a beacon to guide us in our interpretation. They teach us that the Psalm is not a prediction ; that the Psalmist does not put himself in the

place of the Messiah to come. They show us that here, as indeed in all Scripture, two streams, the human and the Divine, flow on in the same channel. They seem destined to remind us that if prophets and minstrels of old were types of the Great Teacher of the Church, yet that they were so only in some respects, and not altogether. They bear witness to the imperfection of those by whom God spake in time past unto the fathers, in many portions and in many ways, even while they point to Him who is the living Word, the perfect revelation of the Father.

1-4. These contain the cry for help, and the description of the Psalmist's miserable condition.

4. Without cause, as in 35 : 19 ; 38 : 19. To this passage, probably, allusion is made by our Lord (John 15 : 25). The manner of citation plainly shows how we are to understand the words "that it might be fulfilled." What was true, in some sense, even of the suffering Israelite under the law, was still more true of Him in whom was no sin, and whom, therefore, His enemies did indeed hate without cause.

5. Then follows the appeal to God from the unrighteousness of men. The manner in which this appeal is made is, however, unusual. Generally speaking, under such circumstances, we find a strong assertion of the integrity and innocence of the sufferer, and a complaint that he suffers unjustly ; here, on the contrary, we find him appealing to God's knowledge of his *foolishness* and his *sins*. He does not attempt to assert that he is innocent, but only that his enemies are unjust and malicious in their attacks. And then he urges his appeal for mercy on the ground that others who trust in God will be put to shame, if His servant is left to perish. P.

When we feel that we have been foolish we are not, therefore, to cease from prayer, but rather to be more eager and fervent in it. They who have seen their sins in the light of God's omniscience are able to appeal to that omniscience in proof of their piety. He who can say, "*Thou knowest my foolishness*," is the only man who can add, "But Thou knowest that I love thee." S.

God is full of compassion to the sinner, whose worst of sin He knows. It is not pity merely that comes from Him, but sympathy ; and how wide the difference between these the struggling heart understands. Our comfort does not begin in forgetting our sins, but in remembering them, and in bringing them all under the view of His mercy, which is as wide

and wakeful as His omniscience. "O God ! Thou knowest my foolishness, and my sins are not hid from Thee." Our confidence is sustained by thinking that as His knowledge of us is far larger than our own, as He is greater than our hearts, and sees secret sins we overlook, and past sins we forget, so His mercy is exalted above our conception, "as high as heaven is above the earth," and ready to put our sins away "as far as east is from the west." Ker.

6. The heaped-up Divine names are so many appeals to God's honor, to the truth of His covenant relationship. The one praying here is indeed a sinner ; but what men are doing to him is not justified thereby ; he suffers it for the Lord's sake, it is the Lord Himself that is reviled in his person. Upon this he in v. 7 bases his prayer. D.

9. Hath consumed, literally, "eaten." Similar expressions with respect to the prophets will be found (Jer. 6 : 11 ; 15 : 17 ; Ezek. 3 : 14). This, which was true in various imperfect degrees of these servants of God of old, was in a far higher sense true of the only begotten Son, who could say, I seek not Mine own glory. Hence, when He purged the Temple, the disciples could not help thinking of these words of the Psalm, as finding their best application in Him (John 2 : 17). P.

16. For Thy lovingkindness is good. By the greatness of Thy love have pity upon Thine afflicted. It is always a stay to the soul to dwell upon the pre-eminence and excellence of the Lord's mercy. It has furnished sad souls much good cheer to take to pieces that grand old Saxon word, which is here used in our version, "*lovingkindness*." Its composition is of two most sweet and fragrant things, fitted to inspire strength into the fainting, and make desolate hearts sing for joy. S.

19. The second principal division of the Psalm opens with a renewed appeal to God. (Compare vs. 5 and 13.) There is a repetition of what had been said already (vs. 4, 7, 9, etc.), together with the additional aggravation mentioned in v. 21. **Thou knowest.** In the certainty that all his sorrows, fears, sicknesses, reproach, sufferings, are known to God, the Psalmist again finds his consolation. P.

20. Broken my heart. If ever human heart was riven and ruptured by the mere amount of mental agony that was endured, it would surely be that of our Redeemer, when, during those dark and dreadful hours on the cross, He, "being made a curse for us," "bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows," and suf-

ferred for sin the malediction of God and man, "full of anguish," and now "exceeding sorrowful even unto death." There are theological as well as medical arguments in favor of the opinion that Christ, in reality, died from a ruptured or broken heart. If the various wondrous prophecies and minute predictions in Psalms 22 and 69, regarding the circumstances connected with Christ's death, be justly held as literally true, such as, "They pierced My hands and My feet," "They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture," etc., why should we regard as merely metaphorical and not as literally true also this declaration, "*Reproach hath broken my heart.*" Sir J. F. Simpson.

21. Vinegar, or, "sour wine." Matthew, who never forgets the foreshadowings of the Old Testament, alludes, there can be no doubt, to this verse of the Psalm, when he mentions, in his narrative of the crucifixion, that the Roman soldiers offered our Lord "vinegar mingled with gall." P.

22. The imprecations in this verse and those following it are revolting only when considered as the expression of malignant selfishness. If uttered by God they shock no reader's sensibilities, nor should they when considered as the language of an ideal person representing the whole class of righteous sufferers, and particularly Him who, though He prayed for His murderers while dying, had before applied the words of this very passage to the unbelieving Jews (Matt. 23 : 38), as Paul did afterward (Rom. 11 : 9, 10). The general doctrine of providential retribution, far from being confined to the Old Testament, is distinctly taught in many of our Saviour's parables. (See Matt. 21 : 41 ; 22 : 7 ; 24 : 51.) A.

We are familiar with the comments that are often made on inspired words like these. "What a spirit," men say, "is here ! How unlike the mild, tender, charitable spirit of our Master, Christ ! How unfit to be repeated by Christians who have been taught in the school of Christ !" This, and the like of this, is what is said, and it proceeds upon two leading mistakes. The first is that the New Testament was meant somehow to abrogate the Old. The second is that God's love is in some kind of way the antagonist of His justice ; that He cannot be really just without ceasing to love ; that He cannot love without trifling with His instinct of justice. Let us remember that, in the verse before us, we are listening, not to David, but to the perfectly righteous Being in whose person David sings. Here we have a

sentence which has nothing to do with human passion, which is based on the most certain laws which govern the moral world. The sentence is a penal judgment uttered against those who have been sinners against the light vouchsafed to them. God does under certain circumstances make the very blessings which He bestows instruments of punishment. A time comes when long unfaithfulness provokes this sentence on a nation, a Church, a soul. By the figure of "a table" is meant a supply of necessary nourishment, whether of soul or body. The table which God prepared before David in the presence of his enemies was the food which sustained his physical life, the grace which sustained the life of his spirit. The table which is spread out before associations of men—before nations, before churches—is the sum total of material, moral, mental, and spiritual nourishment which God sets before them in the course of their history. The table becomes a snare when the blessings which God gives become sources of corruption and of demoralization, when that which was intended to raise and to invigorate does really, through the faithlessness or perverseness of the man or the society, serve only to weaken or depress. This is exactly what happened to the great majority of the Jewish people in the days of our Lord and His apostles. One by one the spiritual senses which should have led Israel to recognize the Christ were numbed or destroyed. A perverse insensibility to the voice of God made God's best gifts the instruments of Israel's ruin. H. P. L.

24. Pour out Thine indignation upon them. What can be too severe a penalty for those who reject the incarnate God, and refuse to obey the commands of His mercy ? God's indignation is no trifle ; the anger of a holy, just, omnipotent, and infinite Being is above all things to be dreaded ; even a drop of it consumes, but to have it poured upon us is inconceivably dreadful. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy, but what shall be the "sorer punishment" reserved for those who have trodden under foot the Son of God ?

25. What occurs on a large scale to families and nations is often fulfilled in individuals, as was conspicuously the case with Judas, to whom Peter referred this prophecy (Acts 1 : 20), "For it is written in the Book of Psalms, let this habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein." S.

26. The reason for the imprecation is given, because of the unpitying cruelty which delighted in adding to the pain and affliction of

one whom God had already brought low. His very suffering might have moved them to compassion. P.—These curses are strictly and exactly retributive, and as such inevitable consequences of Divine justice. The wicked are to suffer above all things for their un pitying cruelty. It is observable that sufferings which are inflicted by God, and indications of His displeasure, are here represented by the Psalmist as calling for compassion and tender sympathy on the part of man. Thus 2 Chr. 28 : 9 ; Job 19 : 21 ; Isa. 53 : 4.

27. The Psalmist does not pray that they should remain in a state of unconversion, not becoming righteous, but that, being unconverted, they should not be dealt with as righteous, suffered to prosper and to escape punishment. *Cook.*

28. Book of life, or, “of the living,” called in Ex. 32 : 32, “the Book of God.” The figure is borrowed from the civil lists or register in which the names of citizens were enrolled. To be blotted out of this denotes exclusion from all the blessings and privileges of the theocracy, and therefore from all hope of salvation, as is evident from the next clause : “Let them not be written with *the righteous* ;” the righteous being the true Israelites, as in Hab. 2 : 4. This is the most terrible imprecation of all, though but the necessary consequence of that obstinate impenitence before supposed. P.—The book of life, *in the human point of view*, has names written in it who have a name to live, but are dead, being in it only by external call, or in their own estimation, and in that of others. But, *in the Divine point of view*, it contains only those who are elected finally to life. The former may be blotted out, as was Judas ; but the latter never. *Fausset.*

29. The Psalm closes with joyful hopes and vows of thanksgiving for God’s mercy, in this respect resembling Psalm 22. In this joy and thanksgiving all other righteous sufferers shall share. And finally Zion and the cities of Judah shall be rebuilt, amid the universal jubilee of all creation. **But as for me,** placing himself emphatically in contrast to those who had been the object of his imprecation. P.

“*But I am poor and sorrowful*, that is the worst of my case ; under outward afflictions, yet *written among the righteous*, and not under

God’s indignation, as they are.” It is better to be poor and sorrowful, with the blessing of God, than rich and jovial and under His curse. For they who come into God’s righteousness shall soon see an end of their poverty and sorrow, and His salvation shall set them up on high. H.

30. “Offer unto God thanksgiving” is the everlasting rubric of the true directory of worship. The depths of grief into which the suppliant had been plunged gave him all the richer an experience of Divine power and grace in his salvation, and so qualified him to sing more sweetly “the song of loves.” Such music is ever most acceptable to the infinite Jehovah. S.—From David learn to give thanks in everything. Every furrow in the Book of Psalms is sown with seeds of thanksgiving. *Jeremy Taylor.*—The crown of all the elements of the Christian character is thankfulness. This is the summit of all, and is to be diffused through all. All our progressive fruitfulness and insight, as well as our perseverance and unruffled meekness in suffering, should have a breath of thankfulness breathed through them. A. M.

33. This joyful certainty of his own deliverance, this joyful hope that others afflicted like himself will rejoice together with him, rests upon the known character of God, upon the universal experience of His goodness. **34.** In remembrance of this he calls upon the universe to praise God. P.

35. *For God will save Zion, and will build the cities of Judah, and they shall dwell in them and possess them.* He who is thus faithful to the individual believer must be faithful to the whole Church. It is characteristic of the ancient saints to regard every personal mercy as a pledge of greater favors to the body of God’s people. This is peculiarly appropriate in such a case as this, where the words are those of an ideal person representing a whole class, and that a class including, as its most conspicuous member, the Messiah Himself.

36. As temporal and spiritual blessings were inseparably blended in the old dispensation, the promise of perpetual possession and abode in Palestine is merely the costume in which that of everlasting favor to the Church is clothed in the Old Testament. A.

PSALM LXX.

FOR THE CHIEF MUSICIAN. A PSALM OF DAVID ; TO BRING TO REMEMBRANCE.

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|--|---|
| <p>1 <i>Make haste</i>, O God, to deliver me ;
 Make haste to help me, O LORD.</p> <p>2 Let them be ashamed and confounded
 That seek after my soul :
 Let them be turned backward and brought to
 dishonour
 That delight in my hurt.</p> <p>3 Let them be turned back by reason of their
 shame
 That say, Aha, Aha.</p> | <p>4 Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be
 glad in thee ;
 And let such as love thy salvation say con-
 tinually,
 Let God be magnified.</p> <p>5 But I am poor and needy ;
 Make haste unto me, O God :
 Thou art my help and my deliverer ;
 O LORD, make no tarrying.</p> |
|--|---|

THIS Psalm is a repetition, with some variations, of the last five verses of Psalm 40. It would seem that it formed originally a part of that Psalm, and was subsequently detached and altered for a special occasion. P.—The resemblance of Psalm 40 to Psalm 69 has already been noticed. This fragment stands in similar relation to both Psalms. Yet it is complete in itself, and therefore suitable for separate use. *De Witt.*

1-5. The title tells us that this Psalm was designed to bring to remembrance, to put God in remembrance of His mercy and promises ; for so we are said to do when we pray to Him and plead with Him (Isa. 43 : 26)—*Put Me in remembrance.* Not that the Eternal Mind needs a remembrancer, but this honor He is pleased to put upon the prayer of faith. It was rather to put Himself and others in remembrance of former afflictions, that we may never be secure, but always in expectation of troubles, and of former devotions, that when the clouds return after the rain, we may have recourse to the same means which we have formerly found effectual for fetching in comfort and relief.

4. He prays that all those who seek God and love His salvation, who desire it, delight in it, and depend upon it, may have continual matter for joy and praise, and hearts for both. To make the service of God our great business, and the favor of God our great delight and pleasure, that is seeking Him and loving His salvation. H.—They that love Christ, love to *think* of Him, love to *hear* of Him, and love to *read* of Him. They love to *speak* of Him, *for* Him, *to* Him. They love His *presence*, His *yoke*, His *name*. His will is their law, His dis-

honor is their affliction, His cause is their care, His people are their companions, His day is their delight, His Word is their guide, His glory is their end. They had rather ten thousand times suffer for Christ than that He should suffer by them. *J. Mason.*

This is not such a world that we can afford to live in it without great nearness to Him who, having died once, liveth evermore. This is not such a life as we should dare to try to live any further without offering the whole of it—its gold, its incense, and its myrrh—possessions, prayers, and praises at the feet of its spiritual King. Light the lamps of faith, then, and watch. Kindle the fire of incense and wait—not sleeping, but watching unto prayer F. D. H.

5. Men forget the poor and needy and seldom think of them, but God's thoughts toward them are their support and comfort. They may assure themselves that God is their Help under their troubles, and will be in due time their Deliverer out of their troubles, and will make no long tarrying ; for the vision is for an appointed time, and therefore, though it tarry, we may wait for it, for it shall come ; it will come, it will not tarry. H.

I am poor and needy. I do not regard my lot either with weariness or compulsion ; I continue in the same sentiment fixed and immovable. I do not think my God displeased with me ; neither is He displeased ; on the contrary, I experience and thankfully acknowledge His paternal clemency and benignity toward me in everything that is of the greater moment, especially in this, that He is Himself consoling and encouraging my spirit. I acquiesce without a murmur in His sacred dispensations ; it is

through His grace that I find my friends, even more than before, kind and affectionate toward me; nor is it an occasion of anguish to me, though you count it miserable, that I am fallen in vulgar estimation into the class of the blind, the unfortunate, the wretched, and the helpless, since my hope is that I am thus brought nearer to the mercy and protection of the universal Father. *Milton.*

Thou art my help and my deliverer. Our Lord's manner toward the multitude of men in the Gospels assures us how He will look on us. Almighty as He is, He could display a tender interest in all who approached Him. So God beholds thee individually, whoever thou art. He calls thee by thy name. Thou wast one of those for whom Christ offered up His last prayer, and sealed it with His precious blood. What a thought is this!—a thought almost too great for our faith. What am I, that God the Holy Ghost should *enter into me* and draw up my thoughts and affections heavenward? *Newman.*

The inmost essence of the Christian life is union to Christ, and abiding in Him. If we are Christians we are in Him in yet profounder sense than creation lives and moves and has its being in God. We are in Him as the earth with all its living things is in the atmosphere, as the

branch is in the vine, as the members are in the body. We are in Him as inhabitants in a house, as hearts that love in hearts that love, as parts in the whole. If we are Christians, He is in us, as life in every vein, as the fruit-producing sap and energy of the vine is in every branch, as the air in every lung, as the sunlight in every planet. This is the deepest mystery of the Christian life. To be "in Him" is to be complete. "In Him" we are "blessed with all spiritual blessings." "In Him" we are "chosen." "In Him" God "freely bestows His grace upon us." "In Him" we "have redemption through His blood." "In Him" "all things in heaven and earth are gathered." "In Him we have obtained an inheritance." In Him is the better life of all who live. In Him we have peace, though the world be seething with change and storm. In Him we conquer, though earth and our own evil be all in arms against us. If we live in Him, we live in purity and joy. If we die in Him, we die in tranquil trust. If our gravestones may truly carry the sweet old inscription carved on so many a nameless slab in the catacombs, "In Christo," they will also bear the other, "In pace" (In peace). If we sleep in Him, our glory is assured, for them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. A. M.

PSALM LXXI.

1 IN thee, O LORD, do I put my trust :

Let me never be ashamed.

2 Deliver me in thy righteousness, and rescue me :

Bow down thine ear unto me, and save me.

3 Be thou to me a rock of habitation, whereunto I may continually resort :

Thou hast given commandment to save me ;
For thou art my rock and my fortress.

4 Rescue me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked,

Out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man.

5 For thou art my hope, O Lord God :

Thou art my trust from my youth.

6 By thee have I been holden up from the womb :

Thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels :

My praise shall be continually of thee.

7 I am as a wonder unto many ;

But thou art my strong refuge.

8 My mouth shall be filled with thy praise,
And with thy honour all the day.

9 Cast me not off in the time of old age ;
Forsake me not when my strength faileth.

10 For mine enemies speak concerning me ;
And they that watch for my soul take counsel together,

11 Saying, God hath forsaken him :

Pursue and take him ; for there is none to deliver.

12 O God, be not far from me :

O my God, make haste to help me.

13 Let them be ashamed *and* consumed that
are adversaries to my soul ;
Let them be covered with reproach and dis-
honour that seek my hurt.

14 But I will hope continually,
And will praise thee yet more and more.

15 My mouth shall tell of thy righteousness,
And of thy salvation all the day ;
For I know not the numbers *thereof*.

16 I will come with the mighty acts of the
Lord God :
I will make mention of thy righteousness,
even of thine only.

17 O God, thou hast taught me from my
youth ;
And hitherto have I declared thy wondrous
works.

18 Yea, even when I am old and grayheaded,
O God, forsake me not ;
Until I have declared thy strength unto *the*
next generation,
Thy might to every one that is to come.

19 Thy righteousness also, O God, is very
high ;
Thou who hast done great things,
O God, who is like unto thee ?

20 Thou, who hast shewed us many and sore
troubles,
Shalt quicken us again,
And shalt bring us up again from the depths
of the earth.

21 Increase thou my greatness,
And turn again and comfort me.

22 I will also praise thee with the psaltery,
Even thy truth, O my God :
Unto thee will I sing praises with the harp,
O thou Holy One of Israel.

23 My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing
praises unto thee ;
And my soul, which thou hast redeemed.

24 My tongue also shall talk of thy righteous-
ness all the day long :
For they are ashamed, for they are con-
founded, that seek my hurt.

*The Prayer of Old Age for Divine Aid to the
End.*

THE whole Psalm is an echo of expressions found in older Psalms, that have become a mental possession of the author and have been revived in him by similar experiences. We look upon it as having been written by Jeremiah. D.—It is evident that it was written by one already past the meridian of life, and verging upon old age. And it borrows so largely from other Psalms—the twenty-second, thirty-first, thirty-fifth, and fortieth, some of them, probably, Psalms written long after the time of David—that it must be regarded as one of the later specimens of Hebrew poetry. Other evidence of an internal kind renders it not improbable that the Psalm was written by Jeremiah. It would apply obviously to his circumstances. His life had been a life of extraordinary perils and extraordinary deliverances. He had been consecrated from his birth, and even before his birth, to his office (Jer. 1 : 5, compared with v. 6 of the Psalm). He had discharged that office for more than thirty years, and might, therefore, be verging on old age in the reign of Zedekiah. The prominent position which he occupied for so long a period before princes and people harmonizes well with the language of the Psalm in vs. 7 and 21. Finally, the style and general character of the poetry are not unlike those of Jeremiah. There

is the same plaintive elegiac strain which we find in his writings, and the same disposition to borrow from earlier poets. P.

1. Not only *on* God must we rest, as a man stands on a rock, but *in* Him must we trust, as a man hides in a cave. The more intimate we are with the Lord, the firmer will our trust be. God knows our faith, and yet He loves to hear us avow it ; hence the Psalmist not only trusts in the Lord, but tells Him that he is so trusting.

3-5. God is *my* rock, *my* fortress, *my* God, *my* hope, *my* trust. All mine shall be His, all His shall be mine. This was the reason why the Psalmist was persuaded that God had commanded his salvation—namely, because He had enabled him to exercise a calm and appropriating faith. S.

Faith is not the passive assent to a list of propositions, but the active devotion to an unrealized ideal. It is that which in the hour of weakness and weariness, in moments of discouragement and depression, enables the Christian to fix his eyes upon Christ, and to do the things that his devotion to Christ calls for, whether he feels like it or not ; whether it is easy or hard ; whether others appreciate and approve, or criticise and condemn. Faith is the grace of conflict as love is the grace of victory. It is the crowning athletic virtue. W. D. Hyde.

3. *Be Thou to me for a rock of habitation, a rock where I may safely dwell and make my*

home, (whither I may be able) *to come always*, *i.e.*, whenever it is necessary ; *Thou hast commanded to save me*, my deliverance is decreed already ; *for my rock*, my hiding-place, *and my fortress art Thou*. The images presented and the terms used are similar to those in Psalm 18 : 2. A.—Be Thou to me *a rock of repose*, *whereto I may continually resort*. They that are at home in God, that live a life of communion with Him and confidence in Him, that continually resort unto Him by faith and prayer, having their eyes ever toward Him, may promise themselves a strong habitation in Him, such as will never fall of itself nor can ever be broken through by any invading power ; and they shall be welcome to resort to Him continually upon all occasions, and not be upbraided as coming too often. H.

5. *For Thou (art) my hope, O Lord, Jehovah, my confidence*, the object of my trust, *from my youth*. A.—Not only is our hope *in* Him, but He Himself is our hope. “God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ,” saith Paul, “our hope.” Yea, there is a deeper, nearer depth : “The glory of the mystery of the Gospel,” says Paul, “is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Christ Himself is our hope, as the only Author of it ; Christ is our hope, as the End of it ; and Christ, who is the Beginning and the End, is our hope also by the way ; for He saith, “Christ *in* you, the hope of glory.” Each yearning of our hearts, each ray of hope which gleams upon us, each touch which thrills us, each voice which whispers in our inmost hearts of the good things laid up in store for us, if we will love God, are the light of Christ enlightening us, the touch of Christ raising us to new life, drawing us up by His Spirit, who dwelleth in us, unto Himself, our hope. For our hope is not the glory of heaven, not joy, not peace, not rest from labor, not fulness of our wishes, nor sweet contentment of the whole soul, nor understanding of all mysteries and all knowledge, not only a torrent of delight ; it is “Christ our God,” “the hope of glory.” Nothing which God *could* create is what we hope for ; nothing which God could give us out of Himself, no created glory, or bliss, or beauty, or majesty, or riches. What we hope for is our Redeeming God Himself, His love, His bliss, the joy of our Lord Himself, who hath so loved us, to be our joy and our portion forever. *Pusey*.

6. *Upon Thee I leaned*, or by Thee was held up, sustained, *from the womb ; from the bowels of my mother*, a synonymous expression, *Thou (art) my bringing out*, the one that brought me out. A.

Have I been holden up. An expression wonderfully descriptive of what faith is, and of what God is to those who trust in Him. He is a Father who bears them in His arms and carries them in His bosom ; they are as children who lean all their weight upon Him, and find their sweetest rest in His supporting hand. This is the very idea of faith, according to its Hebrew signification. When it is said in Gen. 15 : 6 that “Abraham believed God,” it means literally, “*he leaned upon God*.” But the Psalmist speaks here not mainly of his own trust in God, but rather of his experience of God’s loving care and protection.

From the womb. Calvin sees here a reference to God’s goodness even *before* his birth, and has some admirable remarks on our forgetfulness of God’s wonders to us both before and at our birth. In the mouth of Jeremiah, if, as we have conjectured, the Psalm was written by him, such words have a peculiar interest, for they refer, no doubt, to that Word of Jehovah which came unto him saying, “Before thou camest forth from the womb I sanctified thee” (Jer. 1 : 5). P.

The consideration of the gracious care which the Divine providence took of us in our birth and infancy should engage us to an early piety and constant devotedness to His honor. He that was our Help from our birth, ought to be our Hope from our youth. If we received so much mercy from God before we are capable of doing Him any service, we should lose no time when we are capable. H.

8. It not the reason of our finding so little to praise to be sought in our having no eyes for His daily miracles ? The Psalmist *has* eyes for the daily miracles of the Lord ; and, therefore, his mouth is daily full of the praise of the Lord. *Tholuck*.—Many favors which God giveth us ravel out for want of hemming, through our own unthankfulness ; for though prayer purchaseth blessing, giving praise doth keep quiet possession of them. *T. Fuller*.

9. He prays for grace both now and for the time to come : now that my vital power is vanishing away, forsake me not ! So he prays because he, who has already been frequently wondrously delivered, is even now threatened by enemies. D.—The Psalmist says, “Thou madest me hope in my earliest years ; and now, when gray hairs are on me, Thou wilt not forsake me.” As if he said, Wilt Thou lose me at last, when Thou hast had so much care of me hitherto ? Learn, then, from God’s care of thee in creation to expect His care in providence ; and seeing He has had a care to bring thee up

from a child, from that expect yet more good. The more thou can prove God has been good to thee, thou may prove by that that He shall yet do more good. Therefore father kindness upon Him from by-gones, that thou may find kindness for time to come. It is a very evil argument to prevail with man, because He has given much to crave yet more ; but a good argument to prevail with God. For thou may say to Him, Thou hast been gracious to me, and must be gracious to me. To tell Him what good He has done is a band to urge Him to do more ; yea, it is a point of wisdom in thee and a point of thankfulness to Him. *Dickson.*

Cast me not off. Though a prayer, it is also a promise. For when God dictates a petition, it assures us that what He thus prompts us to ask, He is ready to bestow. These words may therefore be considered as revealing the basis of comfort and support offered to an aged Christian. It is as though he said, Man may cast me off ; society may cast me off ; friends, helpers, even children may abandon me ; but, O my God, cast not Thou me off, in the time of old age ! It is a lawful, an urgent, a comprehensive prayer. The old disciple is not forbidden to ask, under submission to God's holy will, that he may be exempted from wasting languors and decrepitude. But submission has here a large part to perform. As we resign to the decision of our faithful Creator the time and manner of our death, so must we leave ourselves implicitly in His hands, as to the whole color of our latter days. And if any may appropriate the cheering words, the aged may surely so do : " Be content with such things as ye have, for He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee ;" words which seem written to be a heavenly answer to this very petition of the Psalmist. *J. W. A.*

There is a peculiar simplicity of heart and a touching singleness of purpose in Christian old age, which has ripened gradually and not fitfully. It is then that to the firmness of manhood is joined almost the gentleness of womanhood ; it is then that the somewhat austere character of growing strength, moral and intellectual, mellows into the rich ripeness of an old age made sweet and tolerant by experience ; it is then that man returns to first principles. There comes a love more pure and deep than the boy could ever feel ; there comes a conviction, with a strength beyond that which the boy could never know, that the earliest lesson of life is infinite, Christ is all. *F. W. R.*

14, 15. I will never cease to hope, and I will even heighten my praises of Thee ; more

and more will I praise Thee for Thine ever-growing mercies. " I know not the numbers thereof ;" I cannot express all Thou has done that is worthy of praise ; there is more than I can tell. The word for " numbers" has the sense of recounting, enumerating. I know not how to count them up. *C.*

15. *My mouth shall recount Thy righteousness, all the day (long) Thy salvation, for I know not numbers* (to express them), I cannot number them, they are innumerable. The *righteousness* or rectitude of God, including His veracity or faithfulness, is here referred to as the cause of his *salvation*, the salvation of which He is the source and author. *A.*

Thy righteousness. The attribute on which all hope of salvation depends. God's righteousness is the pledge not only of His accepting the righteous, but of His adherence to His promises of mercy and forgiveness to penitents. *Cook.*—God's salvation stands to His righteousness in the relation of effect to cause. God has pledged Himself to save those who put their trust in Him, and as a righteous God He cannot deny Himself. This seems to be the connection between the two words in this Psalm. *No numbers* (the Hebrew word occurs only here). God's righteousness and God's salvation are infinitely beyond all man's power to calculate or to repeat. *P.*

We are to bear testimony as experience enables us, and not withhold from others that which we have tasted and handled. The faithfulness of God in saving us, in delivering us out of the hand of our enemies, and in fulfilling His promises, is to be everywhere proclaimed by those who have proved it in their own history. How gloriously conspicuous is righteousness in the Divine plan of redemption ! It should be the theme of constant discourse. *S.*

16. Will come. The ellipsis here may be supplied from Psalms 5 : 7 and 66 : 13, in both which places the same verb denotes the act of coming to God's house for the purpose of solemn praise, and in the second passage cited is followed by the same preposition, *I will come into Thy house with burnt-offerings*, i.e., I will bring them thither. This sense agrees well with the vow to praise God in the two preceding verses, and with the promise of commemoration in the other clause of this verse. *A.*

17. Taught me. Be assured, you that are under the Lord's teaching, there is nothing in your lives but He can teach you by it ; by comforts and crosses, by what He gives and by what He takes away. He unteaches His child

that He may teach him ; shows him his folly that he may make him wise ; strips him of his vain confidence that He may give him strength ; makes him know that he is nothing that He may show him that he has all in the Lord—in Jesus his Beloved One. *J. H. Evans.*

18. Now that he is old, frail, physically almost powerless, he needs the upholding hand of his God more than ever, and he longs to fill out the same course of testimony for God to the very end of life. “Forsake me not ;” uphold me still, until I have testified in behalf of Thy sustaining arm to all future generations. C.—Those that have been taught of God from their youth, and have made it the business of their lives to honor Him, may be sure that He will not leave them when they are old and gray-headed, will not leave them helpless and comfortless, but will make the evil days of old age their best days, and such as they shall have occasion to say they have pleasure in. H.

One of the greatest consolations of old age is to spend what remains of life in honoring God. Ecclesiastical history relates of the Apostle John, that when for very age he was unable any longer to preach the Word, he used to be carried into the Christian assembly, where the most he could utter was, “Little children, love one another !” The modern Church affords numerous instances of ancient believers, who “still bring forth fruit in old age.” Younger disciples may look up to them as advisers, and endeavor to profit by their long experience. Their very patience and tranquillity, while they wait for their Lord, is edifying to the Church. For these reasons, aged Christians are not lightly to suppose that their work is done because they are shut out from public service. It may be that God is more glorified by the quiet graces of their eventide than by their most strenuous exertions while bearing the burden and heat of the day. *J. W. A.*

19-24. The thought of this proclamation carries away the poet so completely that he even now passes over into the strain of it ; and seeing that to his faith the deliverance already lies behind him, the uncomplaining, supplicating, tender song dies away in a loud song of praise, in which he brings all God’s gracious dealings in the future before his mind. D.

19. O God, who is like unto Thee ? Either for greatness or goodness, for power or for mercy, for justice, truth, and faithfulness ; for the perfections of His nature, or the works of His hands ; and to be praised, revered, and adored, as He is. *Gill.*—God is alone ; who can resemble Him ? He is eternal ; He can

have none *before*, and there can be none *after* ; for, in the infinite *unity* of *trinity*, He is that eternal, unlimited, impartible, incomprehensible, and uncompounded, ineffable Being, whose *essence* is hidden from all created intelligences, and whose *counsels* cannot be fathomed by any creature that even His own hand can form. “Who is like unto Thee !” will excite the wonder, amazement, praise, and adoration of angels and men to all eternity. *A. Clarke.*

20. “*Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again.*” Here is faith’s inference from the infinite greatness of the Lord. He has been strong to smite ; He will be also strong to save. He has shown me many heavy and severe trials, and He will also show me many and precious mercies. S.—Quarrel not rashly with adversities not yet understood, and overlook not the mercies often bound up in them ; for we consider not sufficiently the good of evils, nor fairly compute the mercies of Providence in things afflictive at first hand. *Sir Thomas Browne.*

There is no easy way to glory. There is so much evil in us, even after we are born again, that nothing less than a discipline of pain can cleanse our nature. Tribulation is God’s threshing, not to harm us or to destroy us, but to separate what is heavenly and spiritual in us from what is earthly and fleshly. Nothing less than blows of pain will do this. The evil clings so to the holy, the golden wheat of goodness is so wrapped up in the strong chaff of the old life, that only the heavy flail of suffering can produce the separation. Perfection of character never can be attained save through suffering. It is God’s design, in all the pain He sends, to make us better. His fires mean purification until His own image shines reflected in the gold. His prunings mean greater fruitfulness. In whatever form the suffering comes—whether as bereavement, as sin or shame in a friend, or as penitence over one’s own faults and stumblings and grievings of the Spirit—the purpose of the pain is merciful. In all our life in this world, God is saving us ; and suffering is one of the chief agents He employs. Said our Lord, as one of His beatitudes, “Blessed are they that mourn ; for they shall be comforted.” The blessing is not in the mourning, but in the comfort—that is, in the strengthening of the heart to endure the pain victoriously, and get help and better life out of it. Said Paul : “Let us also rejoice in our tribulations ; knowing that tribulation worketh patience ; and patience, probation ; and probation, hope ; and hope putteth not to shame.” Suffering

works out in us qualities of Christian character which cannot be developed in human gladness. "All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous, but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness." A. M.

It is mainly through suffering that the soul is constrained to self-inspection and the knowledge of *itself*, its native character, its relations and its duty to God, its neglects and failures, its follies and sins, its ruin and its peril, its way of forgiveness, deliverance, and safety. This *self knowledge* is the *purpose* of trial, and this its *effect*. Equally indispensable is it as a means of *self-conquest*. Through the invaluable ministry of suffering, under the directing energy of the Divine Spirit, the soul's dormant powers are aroused, an inward strife is awakened, and the will is strengthened for protracted conflict with the strong passions that have held the mastery, until self-conquest is achieved. And this strife with self in order to victory over self is another purpose, use and effect of dis-

appointment, pain and bereavement. Through the warfare and the victory, too, every Divine grace is quickened and augmented in its power over the heart, so that the soul is qualified for the more efficient discharge of duty, for the better improvement of its varied allotments and experiences, and for successful resistance to all spiritual foes. B.

22. Holy One of Israel. This name of God occurs in the Psalms only in two other places, 78 : 41 ; 89 : 18 ; these last two being, according to Delitzsch, older Psalms than this. In Isaiah, this name of God occurs thirty times ; in Habakkuk once ; in Jeremiah (who may have adopted it from Isaiah) twice. P.

23. The essence of song lies in the holy joy of the singer. Soul-singing is the soul of singing. Till men are redeemed, they are like instruments out of tune ; but when once the precious blood has set them at liberty, then are they fitted to magnify the Lord who bought them. Our being bought with a price is a more than sufficient reason for our dedicating ourselves to the earnest worship of God our Saviour. S.

PSALM LXXII.

A PSALM OF SOLOMON.

1 GIVE the king thy judgments, O God,
And thy righteousness unto the king's son.
2 He shall judge thy people with righteousness,
And thy poor with judgment.
3 The mountains shall bring peace to the people,
And the hills, in righteousness.
4 He shall judge the poor of the people,
He shall save the children of the needy,
And shall break in pieces the oppressor.
5 They shall fear thee while the sun endureth,
And so long as the moon, throughout all generations
6 He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass :
As showers that water the earth.
7 In his days shall the righteous flourish ;
And abundance of peace, till the moon be no more.

8 He shall have dominion also from sea to sea,
And from the River unto the ends of the earth.
9 They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him ;
And his enemies shall lick the dust.
10 The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents :
The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.
11 Yea, all kings shall fall down before him :
All nations shall serve him.
12 For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth ;
And the poor, that hath no helper.
13 He shall have pity on the poor and needy,
And the souls of the needy he shall save.
14 He shall redeem their soul from oppression and violence ;

And precious shall their blood be in his sight : and they shall live ;
 15 And to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba :
 And men shall pray for him continually ;
 They shall bless him all the day long.
 16 There shall be abundance of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains ;
 The fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon :
 And they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.
 17 His name shall endure for ever ;
 His name shall be continued as long as the sun :

And men shall be blessed in him ;
 All nations shall call him happy.

18 BLESSED BE THE LORD GOD, THE GOD OF ISRAEL,
 WHO ONLY DOETH WONDROUS THINGS :
 19 AND BLESSED BE HIS GLORIOUS NAME FOR EVER ;
 AND LET THE WHOLE EARTH BE FILLED WITH HIS GLORY !
 AMEN, AND AMEN.

20 The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

Prayer for the Peaceful, Prosperous, Universal, and Everlasting Dominion of God's Anointed One.

EVERYTHING here indicates the pen of Solomon, rather than of David. It is a grand prophetic prayer. It relates to himself and his own administration, but upon the basis of the promise to David in 2 Sam. 7 : 12-16, which included the whole royal race descended from Solomon in its typical unity, and so culminates in the Messiah and His eternal reign of blessing over the whole race. The apocopate form of the verbs in their succession indicate supplication, and that he was not to his full consciousness a prophet. But nevertheless he was an inspired suppliant, and his utterances are a glorious prophecy of the coming and kingdom of a greater than Solomon. *De Witt.*

This Psalm is attributed in the inscription to Solomon, and it bears strong indications of his authorship ; the style resembles that of the Proverbs, and is different from the Davidic Psalms ; the allusions to distant lands, to an extended and peaceful dominion, and a certain air of calm and cheerful reflection, are characteristic of the son of David. It was probably composed early in the king's reign for liturgical recitation, a form in which the people might give expression to loyal and devout aspirations, connected with the head of the Theocratic kingdom. Hence the Messianic tone which pervades the whole ; the author felt himself to be the representative of the ideal and future Messiah ; his prayers and hopes reach far beyond his own sphere ; they are fulfilled only in Christ. This Psalm is thus the culminating point of that portion of Messianic prophecy which sets forth the kingly office of the Saviour. *Cook.*

Two Psalms only in the entire compass of

the Psalter, this and the one hundred and twenty-seventh, bear the name of Solomon. The inscription, beyond all doubt, means to say that the Psalm is Solomon's. Nor do I see any reason for rejecting the tradition thus conveyed to us. Delitzsch contends that we find here the marks both of Solomon's style and of Solomon's time ; that the expressions are arranged for the most part in distichs, like the Proverbs ; that the character of the poetry is reflective ; that it is rich in images borrowed from the world of nature. Besides this, the allusion to Sheba and to Tarshish, and even the extent of dominion which it is hoped would be given to the king, all harmonize with the reign of Solomon better than of any other Jewish monarch. Delitzsch admits, as all the soundest expositors have done, that the hopes and aspirations here expressed—so grand and so far-reaching that they are little less than prophecies—find their fulfilment in one greater than Solomon. "These promises were realized in Solomon, but only typically. They expect, therefore, after Solomon their final realization, and that in the Son of David, whom the prophets of the later kingdom foretell." We have here another instance of the way in which prophecy rooted itself in the Jewish soil, how it looked first to the present and then to the future, first to the type and then to the antitype. Calvin observes most justly, and the observation bears upon the interpretation of all the Messianic Psalms : "They who will have this to be simply a prediction of the kingdom of Christ seem to twist the words very violently." P.

The Psalm, in highly wrought figurative style, describes the reign of a king as "righteous, universal, beneficent, and perpetual." By the older Jewish and most modern Christian interpreters it has been referred to Christ, whose reign, present and prospective, alone

corresponds with its statements. As the imagery of the second Psalm was drawn from the martial character of David's reign, that of this is from the peaceful and prosperous state of Solomon's. *Fausset*.—A greater than Solomon is here. Solomon may be said to stand in the foreground, in the sense that the imagery is borrowed from him and from his reign, but the glory of this personage is far above that of Solomon; the extent of His dominion is greater; its duration indefinitely longer; its blessedness to His subjects far more deep, rich, abiding. The voice of the most remote antiquity assigns this Psalm to the Messiah. *Jarchi* says: "The ancient doctors explained these words of the times of the Messiah, and indeed the whole Psalm concerning King Messiah." And all Christian expositors concur with the Jewish doctors. C.

The successive sentences of this familiar Psalm are really so many petitions; not, as their English form would seem to imply, so many predictions. Prayer is a form of prophecy; it lives and moves in the region of aspiration and hope, and only on the levels of "inspired thought" does it wield an arm of power. The prophetic or Messianic outlook of this Psalm is not therefore surrendered or questioned when it is read as a royal prayer. It deals with an ideal reign, a vision of hope fully and permanently embodied only in the rule of Jesus Christ. The sovereignty constituting the burden of these earnest supplications is one that is grounded on righteousness, securing peace, guarding the weak and the needy against all forms of tyranny, promoting universal prosperity, covering all lands, and enduring with the present course of nature; a lofty ideal for any government, but one whose sublime aims are realized only in the kingdom of God. The prayer is, therefore, in its inmost heart a prophecy of Jesus Christ. *Behrends*.

The seventy-second Psalm contains a description of an exalted king, and of the blessings of his reign. These blessings are of such a nature as to prove that the subject of the Psalm must be a Divine person. His kingdom is to be everlasting and universal. It secures perfect peace with God and good-will among men. All men are to be brought to submit to Him through love. In Him all the nations of the earth are to be blessed; *i.e.*, as we are distinctly taught in Gal. 3:16, it is in Him that all the blessings of redemption are to come upon the world. The subject of this Psalm is, therefore, the Redeemer of the world. *C. Hodge*.—A glowing description of the reign of the Messiah, as right-

eous (vs. 1-7), universal (vs. 8-11), beneficent (vs. 12-14), perpetual, (vs. 15-17), to which are added a doxology (vs. 18, 19), and a postscript (v. 20).

1. By Solomon. O God, Thy judgments to the king give, and Thy righteousness to the king's son. The form of expression in the title is precisely the same as in the phrase so often rendered, *by David*. That it designates the author may be argued not only from this usage, but from the fact that the imagery of the Psalm is as evidently borrowed from the peaceful and brilliant reign of Solomon, as that of the second from the martial and triumphant reign of David. The prayer in this verse is virtually a prediction, as the Psalmist only asks what he knows that God will give. The judicial power, under the theocracy, was exercised in God's name and by His representatives. The Messiah was therefore expected to exhibit this peculiar character in its perfection. By *the king and the king's son* we are not to understand the descendants and successors of David indefinitely, but the last and greatest of them in particular.

2. This is stated as the necessary consequence of the granting of the prayer in the preceding verse. "Give him Thy righteousness, and then he shall judge," etc. A.

3. The mountains shall bring peace. The mountains seem to have been built for the human race, as at once their schools and their cathedrals; full of treasures of illuminated manuscript for the scholar, kindly in simple lessons to the worker, quiet in pale cloisters for the thinker, glorious in holiness for the worshipper. The cathedrals of the earth indeed, with their gates of rock, pavements of clouds, choirs of stream and stone, altars of snow, and vaults of purple traversed by the continual stars. *Ruskin*.—The mountains suggest power and fixedness and duration, rather than love and gentleness. When associated with God, they are used to suggest His might and His eternity. Yet the mountains are used, as here, to set forth the loving-kindness of God. "*The mountains bring peace.*" V.

The "*mountains*" and "*hills*" are not named as the most unfruitful places of the land, which they really were not in Palestine, nor even because what is on them can be seen everywhere, and from all sides, but as being the most prominent points and ornaments of the country, and therefore as representing it, well fitted to express the thought that the country shall be *everywhere* filled with peace. *Hengstenberg*.—

In righteousness. The mountains and hills represent the whole land, of which they are the most prominent objects. The whole country will overflow with the peace which is the result of righteousness. *Cook.*

Peace. This is ever represented in Scripture as the fruit of righteousness, and as the great blessing of the times of the Messiah. The King of Righteousness is also King of Peace. (Compare Isa. 2 : 4 ; 9 : 5, 6 ; 11 : 9 ; 65 : 25 ; Micah 4 : 3 ; Zech. 9 : 10.) P.

5. "They," men in general, the masses of the people throughout his wide realm, "shall fear Thee," in reverence and submission, long as the sun shines ; literally *with* the sun—all along continuously with the shining of His sun upon the face of the earth ; also before the face of the moon, long as the moon shall wax and wane. So long shall Messiah reign. Inasmuch as the entire scope of this Psalm witnesses that this reign of King Messiah here portrayed is His kingdom on this earth in its present state and constitution, and is neither its future era in heaven itself nor any supposed era of peace upon some new earth, reconstructed both materially and spiritually, therefore we are most plainly taught here that Messiah's reign in the triumphs of truth and love upon this very world of ours and under its present constitution *shall be indefinitely long*, stretching on and on through untold, unnumbered ages. Beginning with the most positive, vigorous conflict of light against darkness, love against hate, peace against war, righteousness against all oppression, he shall wrest the sceptre of rule from the grasp of Satan, god and prince of this world, and then Himself rule on in the triumphs of truth and love over the very world which Satan had cursed so long. C.

"*Throughout all generations*" shall the throne of the Redeemer stand. Humanity shall not wear out the religion of the Incarnate God. No infidelity shall wither it away, nor superstition smother it. As long as there are men on earth Christ shall have a throne among them. Instead of the fathers shall be the children. Each generation shall have a regeneration in its midst. Even at this hour we have before us the tokens of His eternal power ; since He ascended to His throne, eighteen hundred years ago, His dominion has not been overturned, though the mightiest of empires have gone like visions of the night. We see on the shore of time the wrecks of the Cæsars, the relics of the Moguls, and the last remnants of the Ottomans. Charlemagne, Maximilian, Napoleon, how they flit like shadows before us ! They were and

are not, but Jesus forever is ; the Son of David has all hours and ages as His own. S.

6. *He shall come down like rain upon mown (grass), like showers, the watering of the earth (or land).* This beautiful comparison suggests the idea of a gentle yet refreshing and fertilizing influence, to be exerted by the King, whose reign is here foretold. The word translated *showers*, by its etymological affinities, suggests the idea of abundance or copiousness. A.—The gracious influence of the monarch and of His righteous sway is strikingly compared to the bountiful shower which freshens the withered herbage, and changes the brown, bare, parched, dusty surface, as by a touch of magic, into one mass of verdure and bloom. We have the same figure in Deut. 32 : 2 ; Job 29 : 22, 23, and Prov. 16 : 15. But the most striking parallel is in the last words of David (2 Sam. 23 : 4), where it is said of one who ruleth righteously and in the fear of God among men, that He is

Like the light of the morning when the sun ariseth,

A morning without clouds ;—

From the sunshine, from the rain, the green grass (sprouts) from the earth. P.

There cannot be a more lively image of a flourishing condition than is conveyed in these words. The grass which is forced by the heat of the sun before the ground is well prepared by rains is weak and languid, and of a faint complexion ; but when clear shining succeeds the gentle showers of spring, the field puts forth its best strength, and is more beautifully arrayed than ever Solomon in all his glory. *T. Sherlock.*

"*The mown grass ;*" literally, "*that which is shorn,*" whether *fleece* or *meadow*. In the latter sense the word is found (Amos 7 : 1) ; and this is indisputably its meaning here, as the parallel shows. The *mown* meadow is particularly mentioned, because the roots of the grass would be most exposed to the summer heat after the crop had been gathered in, and the effect would be most striking in the shooting of the young green blade after the shower. P.

The greatest powers of nature work most calmly and noiselessly. What so gentle as the day-dawn rising mutely in the brightening east, and pouring its light upon the eye so softly that, swift as are those rays, the tenderest texture of the eye endures no wrong ? And what more soft than the spring's falling rain ? It may come preceded by the thunder, but it is gentle itself, and when most efficacious descends almost as a spiritual presence, "as small

rain on the tender herb, and as showers that water the earth." And like to these in their operations are the Gospel and Spirit of Christ. When our Saviour came into the world it was silently and alone. All heaven was moved, and followed Him down to the threshold, but few on earth knew it. One solitary star pointed to the humble birthplace, and hymns sang of it, heard only at night by the watching shepherds. He walked our world through years softly in the bitterness of His soul; He left where the common eye beheld but an ignominious sufferer; and men became aware that the Son of God had come and gone only when the clear light began to break in the eastern sky from that great work of His, and when the open gate of mercy was thrown back, with a cross before it to call the lost and wandering home. And as it was with His descent into the world, so it is with His entrance by the Spirit into the heart. There may be the thunder and the mighty rushing wind before it, the providences may be loud and violent, but the Spirit itself is like the rain. It moves from soul to soul among the rising generations, and there is no outward crisis to tell of the birth of souls. It is like the dew that falls at night, and in the morning it is there, and man cannot tell when it formed itself, like a celestial guest, within the flower-cup. The kingdom of heaven cometh not with observation. And, even in times of revival more marked, for such times are promised and should be expected; yet even in such times, the Spirit's great work is not in the earthquake or the mighty rushing wind, but is in the still small voice. Unless it meet us there, in the secrecy of the soul, in the privacy of the closet, in the rising to seek Christ at His grave in the quiet resurrection morn when the busy world and all the guards are fast asleep, unless it bring the soul into close and secret communion with Christ Himself, it meets us not at all. In His Gospel and His Spirit, Christ is moving through the great inner world which men too much neglect, the world of souls, and there in the solitude of the heart, alone with Him, it must be ours to seek and find. *Ker.*

The Church, without the manifestations of Christ's presence and grace, is, like the mown grass, languishing for heaven's moisture. Favored with these manifestations, it is like a field which the Lord hath blessed. And we are warranted to look for gracious visitations to the Church. The text is not to be regarded as a prophecy pertaining merely to the future, but as a statement which has been verified already in the history of the Church, and which may

be verified in like manner at the present day. When Christ is to come down for the refreshment of His people, like rain upon the mown grass, it will generally be found that they have been stirred up earnestly to desire and long for His manifestations; that they have been excited to the exercises of deep repentance and prayer; that they have set themselves to walk before Him according to all the appointments of His Word; that they have been brought to give greater honor to the Spirit and His work than they were accustomed to do before, and to feel more deeply their absolute dependence upon His gracious operations. *A. B. Davidson.*

7. *In His days shall the righteous flourish; righteousness shall be practised, and those that practise righteousness shall be preferred. Righteousness shall abound and be in reputation, shall command and be in power. The law of Christ written in the heart disposes men to be honest and just and to render to all their due; it likewise disposes men to live in love; and so it produces abundance of peace and beats swords into ploughshares. Both holiness and love shall be perpetual in Christ's kingdom and shall never go to decay, for the subjects of it shall fear God as long as the sun and moon endure. Christianity, having got footing in the world, shall keep its ground till the end of time, and having got footing in the heart, it will continue there till by death the sun and the moon and the stars—that is, the bodily senses, are darkened. Through all the changes of the world and all the changes of life Christ's kingdom will support itself; and if the fear of God continues as long as the sun and moon, abundance of peace will. The peace of the Church, the peace of the soul, shall run parallel with its purity and piety, and last as long as these last.* *H.*

Abundance of peace, literally, "*multitude of peace*"—that is, the things which produce peace, or which indicate peace, they will abound everywhere. They will be found in towns and villages and private dwellings; in the calm and just administration of the affairs of the State; in abundant harvests; in intelligence, in education, and undisturbed industry; in the protection of the rights of all. *Barnes.*

8. The desire for the uninterrupted felicity of the righteous under this king is followed by the desire for the unlimited expansion of his dominion. The sea (the Mediterranean) and the river are geographically defined starting points, whence the determination of the boundaries stretches away into the unlimited. Even upon his accession to the throne Solomon

reigned over all kingdoms from the Euphrates to the confines of Egypt; but the desires expressed here transcend these limits.

9, 10. The nomadic tribes right and left of the Arabian Gulf reverently bend the knee before Him; and they that oppose Him must ultimately hide their face before Him in the dust. The most distant west and south become subject and tributary to Him; the kings of Tarshish in the south of Spain, which was rich in silver, and of the islands of the Mediterranean and of the countries on its coasts, the kings also of the South Arabian and of the Cushite. D.

10. The proper names in this verse are mere specimens or samples of the nations generally. *Tarshish* is mentioned, both as a well-known mart or source of wealth, and as a representative of the extreme *west*. *The islands*, agreeably to Hebrew usage, include all distant sea-coasts, but particularly those of the Mediterranean. The distant *south* is represented, in like manner, by *Sheba*, a province of Arabia Felix, and *Seba*, now commonly supposed to be Meroe, a part of ancient Ethiopia, both famous for their wealth and commerce. The obvious allusion to the Queen of Sheba's visit to Jerusalem is another stroke in this prophetic picture evidently borrowed from the times of Solomon. A.—Tarshish, in all probability the same as the Greek *Tartessus*, a great naval mart, and, according to Arrian, a colony of the Phœnicians, in the south of Spain. It traded with Tyre in silver, iron, tin, and lead (Ezek. 27 : 12). Tarshish and the isles, "the empires on the shores of the Mediterranean," are here mentioned as representatives of all the great maritime and commercial countries of the world. "Seba," first mentioned as among the sons of Cush (Gen. 10 : 7), and joined with Egypt and Cush (Ethiopia) in Isa. 43 : 3, "a nation of Africa, bordering on or included in Cush, and in Solomon's time independent, and of political importance." P.

"*The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents.*" Trade shall be made subservient to the purposes of mediatorial rule; merchant princes, both far and near, shall joyfully contribute of their wealth to his throne. Seafaring places are good centres from which to spread the Gospel; and seafaring men often make earnest heralds of the cross. Tarshish of old was so far away, that to the Eastern mind it was lost in its remoteness, and seemed to be upon the verge of the universe; even so far as imagination itself can travel shall the Son of David rule. S.

11. *And to Him shall all kings bow (or pros-*

trate themselves), all nations shall serve Him. The act described in the first clause is one expressive both of civil homage and religious worship. The same thing is true of the verb in the last clause, which may be applied either to the civil service of a sovereign by his subjects, or to the religious service of a deity by his worshippers. In this case, as in v. 10, both were meant to be included. A.—The extent of the mediatorial rule is set forth by the two far-reaching *alls*, all kings and all nations; we see not as yet all things put under Him, but since we see Jesus crowned with glory and honor in heaven, we are altogether without doubt as to His universal monarchy on earth. "Every knee shall bow to Him, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Hasten it, O Lord, in Thine own time. S.

12-14. The reason is given why all kings and nations should thus do homage to Him who sits on David's throne. He has merited such submission by the exercise of every royal virtue, by the justice and the mercy of His sway, by His deep sympathy with and compassion for the poor, by the protection which He extends to them against the ministers of fraud and violence. It is not that He merely covers with the shadow of His throne all neighboring nations, and is acknowledged as their political head, but that the bright example which He sets, the majesty of righteousness enthroned in His person, compels all to bow before Him. P.—It is because He fills the Divine and most perfect idea of a moral sovereign, administering justice with faultless impartiality, and forevermore befriending the oppressed as against His oppressor. Under His reign each needy one, crying for help, is heard and saved. Their blood is precious in His eyes. No harm done to them or attempted can escape His swift retribution. The strong, it is assumed, can take care of themselves; the weak, defenceless ones are objects of His care; He rules for their protection and salvation. To right the wrongs of this long time sin-cursed earth is His special mission. Be His name praised forever for all this! So the Psalmist proceeds to say. C.

15. Prayer also shall be made for Him continually; and daily shall He be praised. It might have been rendered, "Prayer also shall be made *through* Him continually, and daily shall He be blessed." The word is rendered "blessed," when speaking of an act of worship toward God; and the word translated "for" is sometimes used for "through." Edwards.

Who, with the Word of God in his hand, but must feel that an era of enlarged Christian liberality is hastening on? Prophecy is full of it. As often almost as she opens her lips on the subject of Messiah's reign, the consecration of the world's wealth forms part of her song. "To Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba." "The merchandise of Tyre shall be holiness to the Lord; it shall not be treasured nor laid up." "Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God." Wealth, which for so many ages had robbed Him of His glory, and which in so many idolatrous forms had been erected in His stead, shall be brought to His altar, and employed as the fuel of a sacrifice in which the heart shall ascend as incense before Him. It will then be felt that the highest use to which wealth can be applied is to employ it for God; that this is the only way to dignify that which is intrinsically mean; to turn that which is perishing into unfading crowns and imperishable wealth. *J. Harris.*

16. According to the more ancient view, the verse contains a beautiful antithesis between the small beginnings and the vast results of the Messiah's kingdom, not unlike that suggested by our Saviour's parable of the grain of mustard seed. This exegetical analogy, together with the striking character imparted to the verse by this interpretation, are sufficient to entitle it to the preference, even without regard to its antiquity and traditional authority. *A.*

The idea is that the whole country should be one bright sunny picture of gladness and fertility, the corn-fields being seen not only in the valleys, but rising, terrace above terrace, along the mountain-sides, till they reach their summits. The rustling of the corn-fields in the wind is compared to the rustling of the cedars of Lebanon, so thick shall the corn stand, so rich shall be the harvest. *P.*

Under His government there shall be a wonderful increase both of meat and mouths, both of the fruits of the earth in the country, and of the people inhabiting the cities. Even upon the tops of the mountains the earth shall bring forth by handfuls; that is an expression of great plenty (Gen. 41:47); as the grass upon the housetop is said to be that wherewith the mower fills not his hand. This is applicable to the wonderful productions of the seed of the Gospel in the days of the Messiah. A handful of that seed, sown in the mountainous and barren soil of the Gentile world, produced a wonderful harvest gathered into Christ, fruit that

shook like Lebanon. The fields were *white to the harvest* (John 4:35). The grain of mustard-seed grew up to a great tree. The towns shall grow populous. *They of the city shall flourish like grass*, for number, for verdure. The Gospel Church, the city of God among men, shall have all the marks of prosperity, many shall be added to it, and those that are shall be happy in it. *H.*

"*Shall flourish like grass.*" The peculiar characters of the grass, which adapt it especially for the service of man, are its apparent *humility* and *cheerfulness*. Its humility, in that it seems created only for lowest service—appointed to be trodden on and fed upon. Its cheerfulness, in that it seems to exult under all kinds of violence and suffering. You roll it, and it is stronger next day; you mow it, and it multiplies its shoots, as if it were grateful; you tread upon it, and it only sends up richer perfume. Spring comes, and it rejoices with all the earth—glowing with variegated flame of flowers—waving in soft depth of fruitful strength. *Ruskin.*

17. The Redeemer of the world is Jehovah. The coming of Jehovah is the centre of the Old Testament proclamation of salvation. A parable may be illustrative of the manner in which the Old Testament proclamation of salvation is gradually developed. In relation to the day of the New Testament the Old Testament is night. During this night there mount up two stars of promise in opposite directions. The one describes its path from above downward; it is the promise of Jehovah who is about to come. The other describes its path from below upward; it is the hope which is reposed in the seed of David, the prophecy of the Son of David, which is at first altogether human and only earthly. These two stars meet at last, they blend together into one constellation; the night vanishes and it is day. This one constellation is Jesus Christ, Jehovah and David's Son in one person, the King of Israel and at the same time the Redeemer of the world; in one word, the God-man. *D.*

18, 19. *Blessed (be) Jehovah, God, the God of Israel, doing wonders alone, and blessed (be) His glorious name to eternity, and filled with His glory be the whole earth. Amen and Amen.* This is commonly explained as a doxology belonging, not to this Psalm, but to the second book, of which it marks the close. But as the Psalm would end somewhat abruptly with the foregoing verse, and as this addition carries out the idea there expressed, by giving, as it were, the very words in which the nations shall pro-

nounce Him blessed, we have reason to believe that the doxology was added by the author, and that this conclusion of the Psalm was not the effect but the occasion of its being placed at the close of one of the traditional divisions of the psalter. The wish in the second clause of v. 19 is borrowed from the promise in Num. 14 : 21, of which this whole Psalm is in fact a prolonged echo. A.

To the Lord Jehovah, the covenant God of Israel, be all the glory of this kingdom, all the honor for giving to Israel and to the wide world this munificent and perfect Sovereign ! He only and He alone performs such wondrous works. Let His glorious name be blessed forever, and the whole earth be vocal with His praises, full of His glory ! This rich doxology rounds out to its fit completion this magnificent Psalm, and also fitly closes the second Book of Psalms as originally compiled. C.

"*Amen*" is a short word, but marvellously full of sense, full of spirit. It is a word that seals all the truths of God, that seals every particular promise of God. *Sibbes*.

20. *Ended are the prayers of David, Son of Jesse.* The position of this sentence after the doxology, and its prosaic form, show that it forms no part of the Psalm, but relates to the whole series preceding. It does not, therefore, prove, as some suppose, that Solomon was not the author of the seventy-second Psalm, since this exception and a very few others could not prevent the collection being called the prayers of David. In like manner, the whole Psalter is still called the Psalms of David by many who believe it to contain some Psalms by other writers. On the whole, it is most probable that these words were added to the first great subdivision of the whole collection, as entirely composed of Psalms by David and his contemporaries, with a few added to them on account of some marked similarity in form or substance. A.

Two Psalms bear *Solomon's* name in their titles. One of these is the hundred and twenty-seventh, the other is the seventy-second ; and here the traces of his pen are unequivocal. A mistaken interpretation of the note appended to it, "The prayers of David the Son of Jesse are ended," led most of the old commentators to attribute the Psalm to David, and to suppose that it is a prayer offered in his old age "for Solomon," as the peaceful prince who was to succeed him on the throne. However, it has long been known that the note in question refers to the whole of the preceding portion of the Psalter, much of which was written by

Asaph and the sons of Korah ; and there can be no doubt that the title can only be translated, "of Solomon." *Binnie*.

The title "prayers" is not borrowed from the inscriptions of the Psalms, for only one in this collection, the seventeenth, is expressly styled "a prayer." In the later books a few other Psalms are entitled "Prayers." But here the title, as a general title, is justified by the contents of most of the Psalms. Psalms, it is true, like the first, the second, the thirty-third, the thirty-seventh, contain no address to God, and many others, which contain petitions and supplications, are not throughout in the form of prayers. And yet, if prayer be the eye of the heart turned toward God, then each Psalm is a prayer, just as Hannah's song of praise is styled a prayer. Thus the very names of the Psalms, "Praises and Prayers," not only tell us what they are, but remind us in the language of the apostle, "In everything, by prayer and supplication, *with thanksgiving*, to make known our requests unto God." P.

Jean Paul Richter says of the Christ : "The holiest among the mighty and the mightiest among the holy ! With His pierced hand He lifted empires off their hinges and turned the stream of centuries out of its channel ; and He still governs the ages."

How beautifully and how faithfully does this Psalm picture the characteristics of the Redeemer's kingdom—peace, righteousness, justice, compassion, the relief of suffering, the redress of wrongs, the overthrow of evil ! Where the principles of Christ prevail in society and government, there is peace, plenty, prosperity ; oppression is broken ; violence and deceit are banished ; the poor are cared for, the needy succored ; industry and commerce flourish ; the hills are clothed with corn, the cities thrive as with the verdure of spring. Blessed be God that this kingdom of Christ is yet to prevail in all the earth ! "The most *uncivilized*, the most *distant*, and the most *opulent* nations shall pay their homage to Him ; the barbarous inhabitants of the desert, the remote isles of the west, and the kings of rich Arabia (Sheba) and Ethiopia (Seba), shall lie prostrate in homage at His feet." J. P. T.

The biblical conception of the heavenly kingdom cannot fail to provoke to patience, liberality, and hope. The task to whose execution we are summoned is exceptionally vast, and the movement is correspondingly slow. The birth of the millennium is not the work of a

day. Two thousand years of Christian endeavor, centuries of patience and suffering, are behind every church and school in Christendom, underneath every Christian home; and yet some men look doubtfully on modern missions, with its half a million communicants gathered in half a century, because forsooth, civilizations that have in them the fibre of thousands of years, the spirit of long and proud ancestries, the inspiration of great names and great literatures, have not been forced to surrender in a picket warfare of only fifty years. We have as yet only sent out the advanced scouts and the single riflemen; Christendom must yet move in solid and serried columns for the conquest of the East. There is coming a clash of civilizations, taxing all the energies and resources of the Church of God. As in the early summer there comes a time when the young buds, rocked through all the long winter in their tiny cradles, lifeless to all appearance, burst their frail enclosures and transfigure in one short week the whole face of nature, so may God be stirring in the preparatory measures of the present, until the world's summer shall rise, a nation be born in a day, the frail hindrances all give way and the whole earth be rapidly transfigured into newness of life. For the Divine preparations, both in nature and history, are always varied and hidden and slow; the culminations are always rapid and startling. Yet are the latter only the outcome of forces that were repressed but regnant, until the clock of time had proclaimed the hour of noon. Victory is coming; slowly perhaps—as men count slackness—but none the less surely and solidly. Open your souls to the inspiration of this thought! Let this breath from heaven swell every purpose, and fling out for its welcome every inch of canvas you can command! There is a great future for the Church and the world. We quarry and hew and chisel, under the Divine direction, for a building that is silently rising to be an holy temple unto the Lord, covering the earth with its ample dimensions, filling the highest heavens with its imperishable glory, gathering and garnering within its broad spaces the wealth of all the generations. Who would not be a citizen of this king-

dom! Who will not take an active part in so great, so blessed, so imperishable a work! *Behrends.*

No portion of the Hebrew Scriptures has transfused its spirit into the Christian Church more completely than the Book of Psalms. The first Christians seem to have found in it an adequate expression of their deepest feelings. Eliciting its spiritual meanings and interpreting its doctrinal teaching under the light of a perfect revelation, they adopted the Psalter as the foundation and the model of their devotions. The Fathers saw in every Psalm distinct utterances of the Spirit of Christ. They did not, indeed, hold that the individuality of the Psalmist, of David especially, was altogether suppressed; or that the words uttered by him did not give true expression to the movements of his own spirit; but they believed that they were overruled so as to become at the same time true utterances of the Spirit of Christ. . . . The Psalter emptied of Christ would still be a collection of lyric poems of admirable beauty, breathing a pure and lofty devotion, representing in vivid colors the events and persons of the most remarkable people in the world's history. It would retain its position among the noblest and most interesting products of human genius. But to the Christian, as such, it would have no voice, no meaning; losing its highest and most distinctive characteristic, it would forfeit its claims upon his reverence and love. *Cook.*

If one wished that the best of all saintly legends, the finest of all exemplars and histories should be called out, set in order, and presented in the best way, it could be none other than our present Psalter. For we find here, not what one or two saints have done, but what the chief of saints himself has done, and what all the saints still do; how they stand toward God, toward friends and enemies; how they act in all dangers and suffering; and we find, besides, all kinds of wholesome doctrines and commands. And the Psalter should be dear and cherished because it so clearly foretells Christ's death and resurrection, His kingdom and the whole estate and nature of Christianity. So that we may well call it a little Bible. *Luther.*

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